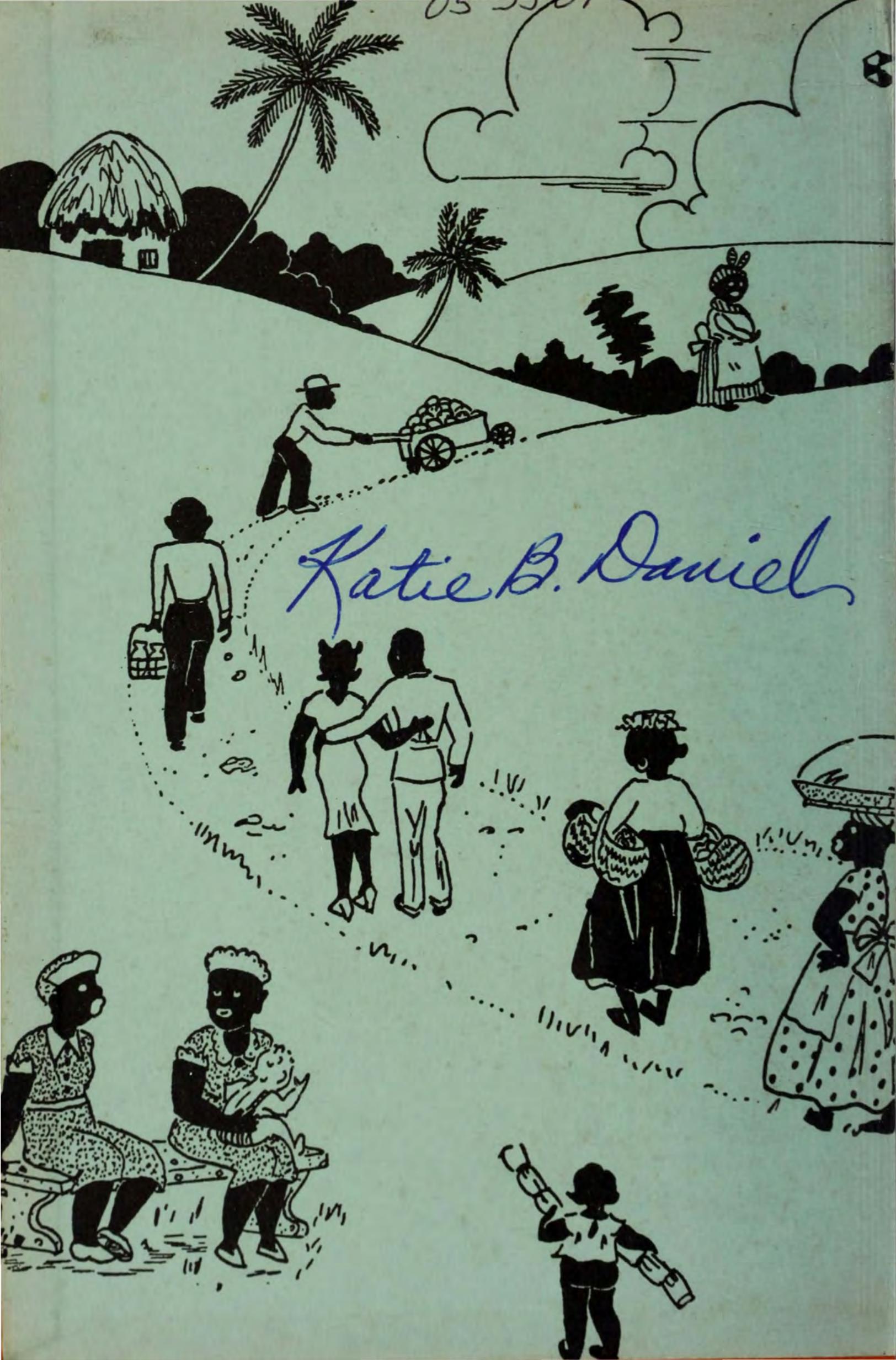


MAID IN PANAMA

SUE CORE





Katie B. Daniel

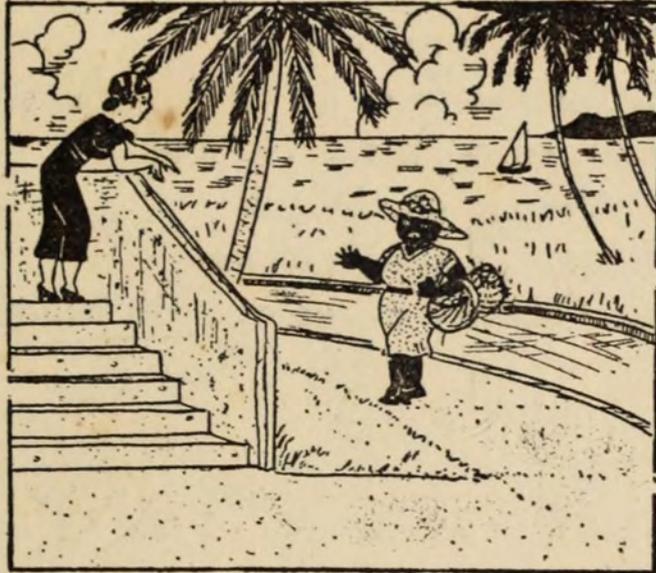


The Panama Canal Museum





MAID IN PANAMA



Books by
SUE CORE

Trails of Progress
Ravelings from a Panama Tapestry
Christmas on the Isthmus
Soldiering on the Job
Panama's Jungle Book
An Odyssey of the Spanish Main

MAID IN PANAMA

By
Sue Core

Illustrated by
Anne Cordts McKeown



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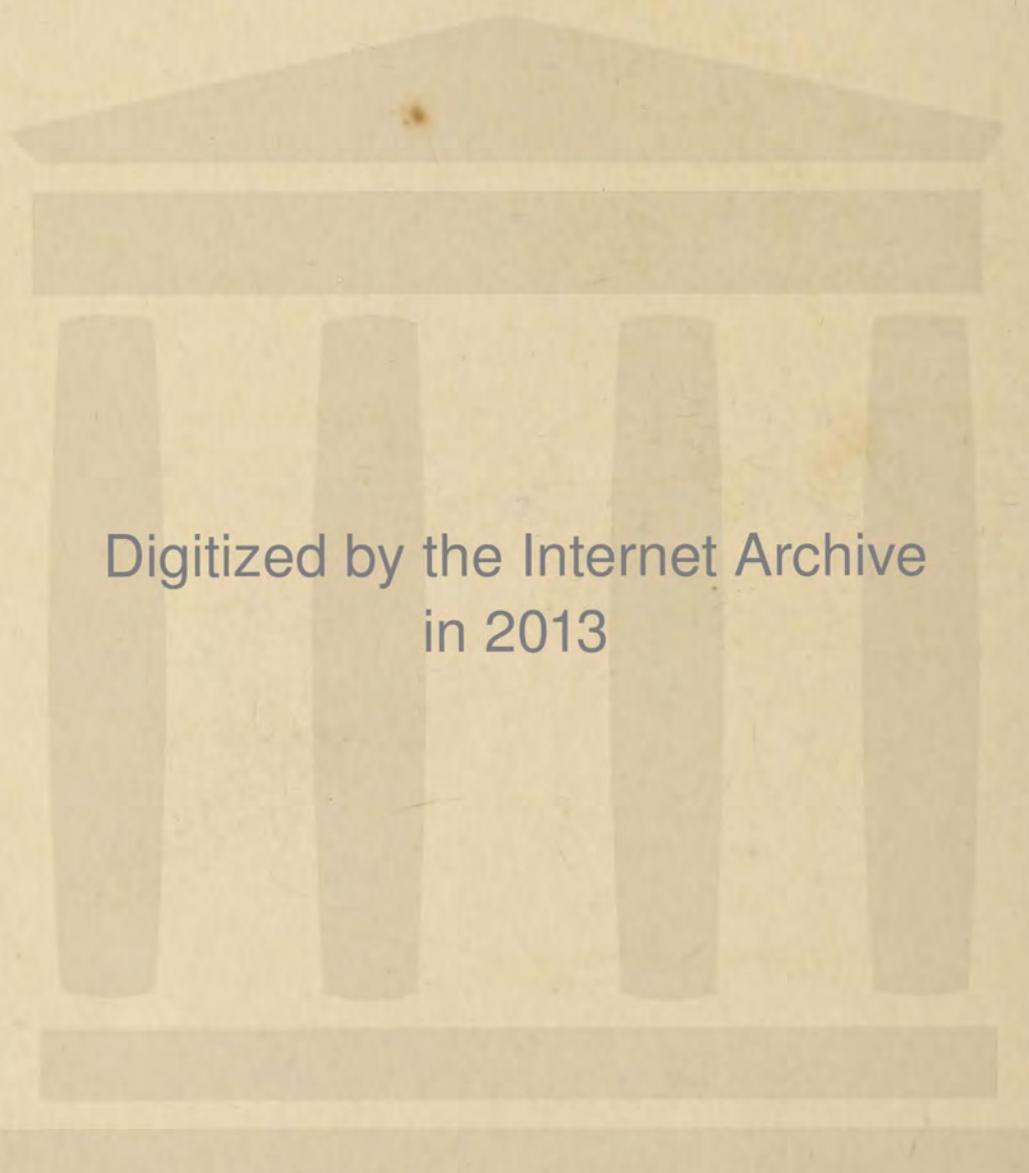
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DEDICATION

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED TO THE OLD TIMERS OF THE PANAMA CANAL, BOTH WHITE AND COLORED; WHOSE MUTUAL DIFFERENCES IN LANGUAGE INTERPRETATION HAVE GIVEN RISE TO AN INFINITUDE OF AMUSING INCIDENTS—A SMALL FRAGMENT OF WHICH ARE RECORDED IN THE FOLLOWING PAGES.



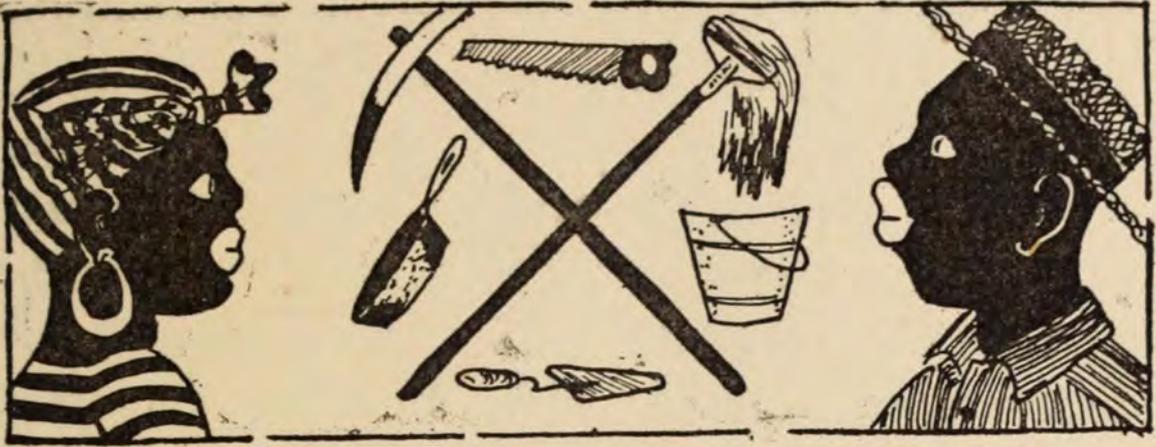


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She has never had a complex;
Inhibitions? Not a chance!
She's serenely set the tempo
Of her life to circumstance.





FOREWORD

SHORTLY after the United States Government took upon its shoulders the tremendous responsibility of building the Panama Canal, those in charge realized that not the least of the attendant difficulties would be solving the labor problem. Even though utilizing the mightiest machinery which man's ingenuity had yet devised, there must still be available an amassment of man power greater than anything the country had even known, and . . . where to get it? That was the question.

The natives of the country were unfitted for the job; both by hereditary inclination and by physical ability. Peoples of Latin lineage had never developed the dogged and determined stolidity necessary for long stretches of rough toil. Their spirits were unwilling, and their statures too frail

for such a back-breaking undertaking as digging a gigantic tunnel from one ocean to another, through the spiny backbone of a mountain range.

White men could not do the work. That had been demonstrated by the failure of the French. The heat and humidity, added to the attacks of disease and vermin to which white workers in a steaming tropical jungle country are subjected, had already laid thousands of Frenchmen in their graves.

Experimentally, but with the speculative hope that possibly Americans were made of a tougher fiber than sons of the fleur-de-lis, workers were sent down from the States at first. The twin horrors of malaria and yellow fever, however, together with homesickness and fear, depleted the workers' ranks almost as fast as the recruiting stations could fill them up.

Newcomers either joined the still legions sleeping on Monkey Hill shortly after their arrival, or they took the next boat home. There was almost no other alternative offered them. It was suicide for a white man to stay where disease and death shadowed every step. Such was the impression among the workers, and such was the reputation of the place which they took back home with them.

It soon became apparent that while the white

man could take care of the supervisory details of the Canal building, other hands than his would have to do the actual spade work; that part of the colossal undertaking which called for a strong back and muscular arms. Toiling with pick and shovel in the steaming mud and muck. . . . no, definitely; the job would never be finished if white men had to do that part of the work.

Casting a worried eye about the world's labor camps, the chiefs of the undertaking next imported several thousand Chinese. Known to be reared with a background of toil and hardship as a racial heritage, they seemed the logical answer to the riddle.

They weren't. They died like flies, succumbing even faster than the white men had done, to the rigors of Panama's disease-infested tropical atmosphere. To this particular type of hardship, their generations of privation on the plains of China, severe as they had been, had never accustomed them.

Terrified at seeing their ranks mowed down so relentlessly and swiftly by venomous onslaughts of malaria and yellow jack, the survivors were thrown into panic. They desperately committed suicide or left for China on the first boat out. The ancient town of Matachin, now deeply buried under the impounded waters of the Chagres, is the

only monument left to mark the disastrous Chinese chapter in the digging of the Panama Canal.

Hindu coolies were tried, also, and found wanting. After the initial experiment it became clearly evident that the frail bodily structure, and even frailer mental attitude toward hard work, of that vegetarian-trained race, would never make the grade. It called for huskier bodies; for more brawn and bone than is likely to be built upon the diet of Gandhi.

After innumerable experiments, all unsuccessful, a decision was finally made to try natives of the near-by Caribbean islands. Of African lineage, and not likely to be affected adversely by the climate, perhaps they would fill the bill. Anyway, the expedient was worth trying.

It was. The skeptical dubiousness with which the authorities watched this new experiment, soon turned to surprised relief. The pocket at the foot of the rainbow had been reached at last; for the West Indian laborer was the answer to the riddle. He was by no means the perfect worker, but he was the best that had yet been found.

These colonial importees were not only strong and healthy, but singularly disease-resistant. Reared in tropical surroundings, they were affected little by adverse climatic conditions which laid the white man low. Infinitely slow and, at

times, maddeningly annoying, but unfailingly willing and cheerful, they plodded away at their share of the work till the job was done. . . . and a permanent waterway ran from the Atlantic to the Pacific. While the Panama Canal is a living testimonial to the ingenuity and skill of American engineers, it is also an enduring monument to the patient and unremitting toil of myriad black men who assisted materially in its construction.

Many of the construction-days immigrants remained on the Isthmus after the great work was completed. They, with a numerous crop of descendants, are now an integral part of the community. Serving in all capacities where hard work is the watch word, they still form the backbone of the labor set-up which keeps the Panama Canal going.

Clerks, dock laborers, grass cutters, garbage men, laundry workers, painters, waiters, carpenters, truck drivers, ice men, delivery boys, janitors, messengers, cooks, laundresses, nursemaids, dressmakers, and general helpers there is no phase of life here in which the colored people do not play a helpful role. They are everywhere; and life is infinitely pleasanter and better, because they are.

The relation between white boss and colored worker is generally one of mutual exasperated

tolerance; but on the whole, however, it is amiable and pleasant. They annoy one another exceedingly at times; but knowing that each is necessary to the well-being of the other, they exercise self-restraint sufficient to get along.

The West Indian is a black man, but very different from the colored people of our own country. Coming chiefly from islands under British jurisdiction, his traditions, his loyalties, and his attitude toward superiors is distinctly different from that prevalent among our colored people. His speech, especially, is different from any ever heard within the confines of our broad land. Poured into a British cast and baked in an oven of native peculiarities, his manner of speaking is highly mystifying, albeit infinitely intriguing to his white associates.

Like most colored people, our West Indian neighbors lean strongly toward the flowery, high-sounding pattern of speaking, rather than the simpler way of talking which is preferred by their "white folks." No self-respecting colored gentleman, asked to do something, would be content to answer briefly, "I will try to do so." No, indeed! It pleases his inner ego more, to say ponderously, "Madam, I shall endeavor to accomplish it for you!"

Laughing at speech peculiarities of others is a

perfectly natural and human failing; but in this case, the score is about even. We chuckle over the linguistic oddities of our West Indian compatriots; they probably laugh out loud over ours!

The diction of the newer generations, trained in Canal Zone schools, differs only slightly from that of Americans hailing from Maine or Illinois. While this may have certain advantages from the angle of harmonious understanding between the two factions, it still adds up as a distinct loss to the world . . . because there is no doubt but that little anecdotes arising from speech differences between white boss and colored helper, form some of the most precious of the many memories which early residents will file away with a sigh of regret when they are heard no more.

For a long time there has been recognized a definite need for some manner of recording and preserving for posterity, some of these intriguing speech figures of the old-time Jamaican workers here. Such a record must be made; should have been started long ere this; because, with the gradual passing of the "Old Timers," both colored and white, the wealth of anecdotes now familiar to everyone, will gradually fade into the limbo of forgotten Isthmians. This small collection is but a wispy fragment of the whole, but it is at least a step in that direction.

A compilation of West Indian anecdotes bears the same relation to Isthmian history as do our frontier tales to early North American history. Little stories of Daniel Boone and Davy Crockett furnish a picture of life in the early eighteen-hundreds. In like measure, these anecdotes of West Indian vs. white employer, paint for posterity a picture of Isthmian life in the "Old Days."

It is, therefore, with this understanding, that these little informal stories have been gathered together. They are not fiction. Every one listed is an actual happening from an experience related by friends and neighbors who make up the American personnel of the Isthmus; they who form the employer-half of all the partnerships with "boys" and "maids"—in Panama.



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PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE

THERE is an old Jamaican vegetable vendor who trundles her toilsome way to my apartment doorstep every day or so. I'm not much of a customer, but her optimism doesn't permit her ever to risk the chance of my buying a stray bag of tomatoes or a pound of string beans from some rival competitor who might try to "muscle in" on her territory if she waxes negligent on the job.

Her peculiar way of letting me know of her presence outside, is a long, low sort of "Hoooo-Hoooo!" somewhat like the call of a cookoo in the jungle. Because of this, and because I have no idea what her real name is, I simply call her "Hoo-Hoo."

Up and down Ancon Boulevard she goes on the days that she doesn't wash clothes for her two or three customers. She has to make every day count, in order to keep soul and body together for

herself and the numerous kinky-headed pickaninies I see trooping at her heels occasionally.

Squat, semi-toothless, brown and wrinkled, her untroubled face reflects a placidity of soul that many a white sister might envy. Erect, because long years of balancing burdens on her head have not permitted the back-curving slouch of the more fashionable nineteen-twenties, she trudges methodically along, uncannily alert for the flash of an apron string or the flip of a dish towel to disclose the presence of some potential feminine customer who happens to be at home instead of off gadding somewhere, as so many white ladies always seem to be.

A big basket on her head holds Hoo-Hoo's stock in trade for beating back the wolf from her door. "Tomahties," in little brown bags, beans parcelled off into "fif—een cent" portions, "nize" plantain, bananas, and occasionally a papaya, make up a burden which would bend the back of a strong man.

Hoo-Hoo, however, lifts it up with only a careful tensing of strained muscles; and, placing it deftly atop the circular pad on her kinky head, she marches majestically off down the steps as nonchalantly as though you or I were carrying a portfolio.

I often ponder over Hoo-Hoo. Wonder, for

instance, just what inner urge it is that can send her out to plod wearily the sun-baked pavements day after day, for such pitifully small returns, and do it with greater cheerfulness than you or I exhibit in the performance of what she would consider millionaire jobs.

No carping or complaining. No grouching over what she doesn't make. Just a small flicker of satisfaction when she manages to put across a sale which at most could not net her more than a few pennies; and no sign of disappointment when she doesn't. Hoo-Hoo has long since become inured to disappointment from following blind trails. One more or less can't mar or upset her serenity.

Under happier stars and in different circumstances, Hoo-Hoo might have been a clever salesman of what the world considers its more important plunder. She has her own naive means of appealing to the buying instinct, subconsciously using tactics of sales psychology of which she has never even heard.

To a crisp, "Nothing today!" she has ready an ingenious missing-toothed smile as she digs down among her little sacks.

"You no care tomahties? Nize big ones, today!" she says coaxingly, extending the sack so you can glimpse the luscious red fruit inside. "Only ten

cent!" She makes it sound, Oh so very, very little to pay for so much.

"And, maybe beans?" from another bag she fishes a fat green pod and snaps it to show that it is tender and practically stringless.

So . . . I buy. Always. Even stock up on purchases for which I have no immediate need, because Hoo-Hoo is such a capable salesman. Half annoyed, but with the feeling of a Girl Scout who has just turned in her quota of good-deeding for the day, I stow my purchases in the refrigerator and vaguely wish Hoo-Hoo didn't consider me such a good friend. She makes me feel such a selfish wretch if I allow her to make that long trek up the hill without making at least a teeny sale.

I decide mentally that I'll be very, very firm next time. I'll break her of marching up this hill to my doorstep; intend to tell her I'm going to the States; or maybe starting on a diet of no vegetables . . . anything so she will let me alone for a while. Yes, indeed, that is exactly what I intend to do the very next time she appears!

Then, first thing I know . . . some afternoon when darkly engrossed in a bridge game or perhaps deep in a magazine, I hear a familiar, coaxing and long-drawn-out "Hooooo-Hoooo!" at the front step.

With a little sigh of resignation I reach for my purse and make for the door. There isn't one single, solitary thing I need; but I know just as well as I know my own name, that I am going to buy something anyway. One always does . . . from a saleslady like Hoo-Hoo!



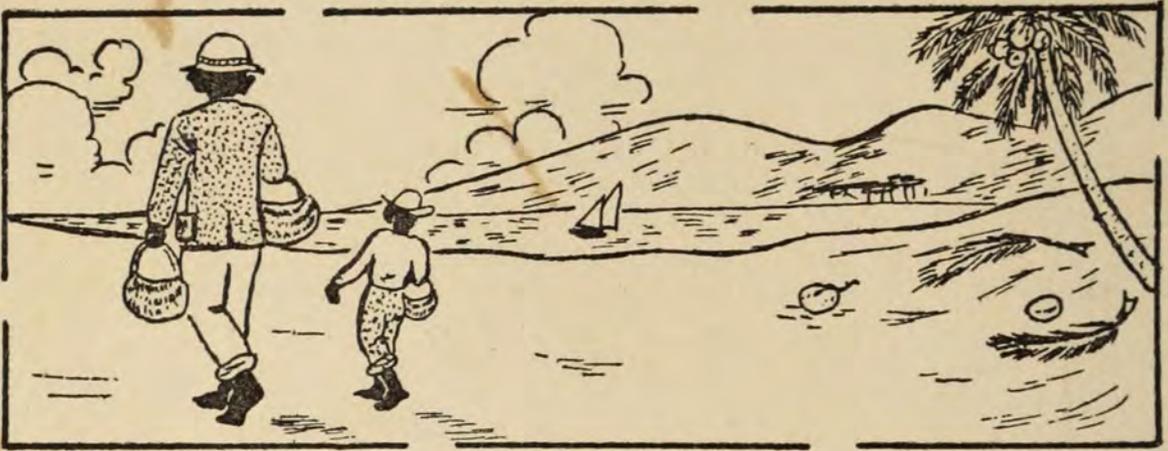
AN ARGUMENT FOR DARWIN

A gentleman passing by the Cristobal Police Station one day saw two colored men watching the antics of a monkey inside the cage. They were admiring the little fellow, and chuckling enjoyably over the way he has been able to fool the white man.

"Him reely smart fellow, for true, mon," said one of them to the other. "Him could talk if him want to, but him doan wish. There where him smart. He know if him talk, the white man work he!"

DOWN FROM FRANKLIN

"I lock off the electric and put the key under the receptacle," said Jinny, meeting her mistress a block from the house as she was leaving for home after work. She had been told always to turn out the lights and put the key under the mat when she left for the night, if the family was not there.



HEREDITY SPEAKS

WE smug and self-satisfied white folks have many ways of saying, "Blood will tell." Meaning, of course, that one can't too successfully buck heredity.

With raised eyebrows we sometimes say, "Well, we have to remember that, after all, she *is* just a Higgins from across the track, you know!" This, when some lady who perchance has married above her station, but who has acquired a veneer of elegance, cracks under the strain and reverts to type; acting like her fish-wife progenitors.

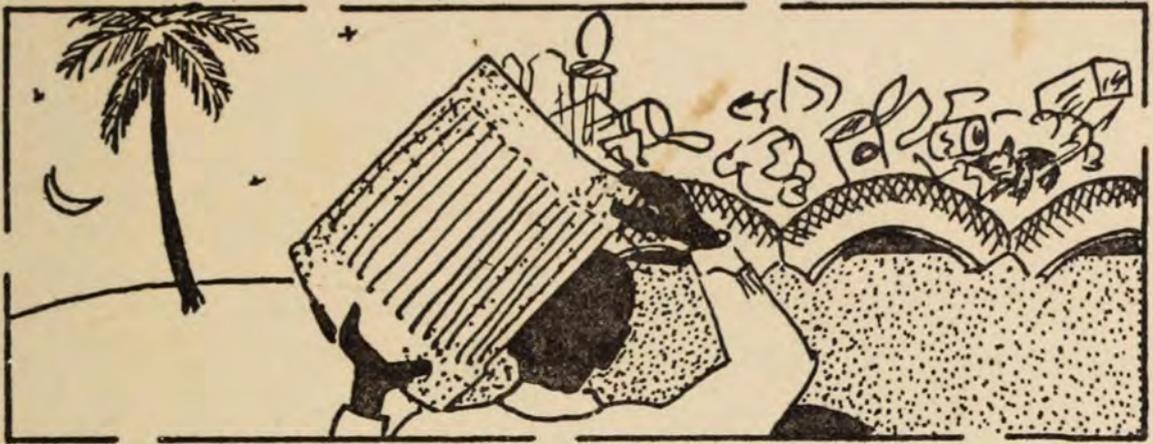
The West Indian has his own naive way of saying the same thing:

"A cocoanut never fall very far from de tree!"



CHIVA CHIVA MAXIM

Folks whut live in grass houses, better be keerful de match!



THE PURITY SQUAD

BENEATH the impressive exterior of every beautifully synchronized organization known, from a family unit to a great railroad system, there lie myriads of small, seemingly unimportant parts, each playing but an insignificant role in the dramatic exterior presented to the world; but embodying in itself, nonetheless, a definite part of the well being of the whole.

A little bolt costing but a few cents may, when missing, render impotent a cleverly intricate engine of great power and human-like ability. The sites on a gun cost little of themselves; but, missing, the highest powered rifle yet built, would be utterly worthless. A tiny watch spring hidden from sight, and costing very little, can bring to an immediate standstill, the entire delicate time-keeping mechanism. An electric fuse is an inconsequential little article when viewed alone,

but it holds the power of light and darkness over our homes.

In organizations made up of human beings rather than mechanical units, the rule holds no less true. It is oftentimes the humble, unnoticed parts of the structure which encompass a greater percentage of the weal of the whole, than the more glittery, pompous executive heads which are so much more assertively obvious to the eye of the public.

In connection with such lines of reasoning, I often cogitate about one of the humblest units of our entire complicated Canal organization—the garbage collectors. Hardly ever glimpsed in daylight hours, since they perform their arduous tasks for the most part under cover of darkness, they are one of the least thanked, yet withal one of the most necessary, of all the cogs whose turning keeps our great enterprise rolling on smooth, well regulated wheels.

Of course, they dislike that job even as you or I might hate to spend our working hours manipulating the foul-smelling offal of the world's back yards. But, like we, they have their work to perform, and with no visible demonstration save a vague suggestion of satisfaction that they at least have jobs in a world of unemployed, work-hungry

men, the garbage crews go doggedly and methodically about their nightly toil.

During the wildest torrential down-pours of a black tropic night, when we drop the slatted shutters to close out the driving wind and rain, we can hear the banging and clanking of garbage cans being dumped onto reeking trucks backed up to our back doorsteps. Wet and sodden; hardly ever possessing even a decent raincoat or shoes adequate against the mud and slush, those humble functionaries must carry on through the long black hours with no hope of drying or warming themselves until their work is done. Garbage cans must not be left standing.

From the cozy heights of my aerial balcony, I can see the brilliant crescent of lights at the garbage ramp, twinkling like a jeweled collar the whole night through. To it in a constant procession during the early part of the evening, but at lengthening intervals as the night advances, come the glaring headlights of the swift-moving trucks; gleaming like the eyes of giant beetles as they rumble in with their contributions to the long lines of cars which wait with open maws for what may be their allotment—and then scurry away, winking into the darkness after more.

In the performance of their unpleasant toil, the ensuing difficulty of making themselves clean and

comfortable in their crowded homes after it is over, the almost impossible feat of getting adequate sleep during the daylight hours in the hot, noisy streets where they live, it should be a considerable satisfaction to the garbage men to know that few functionaries of the entire Canal organization really mean more to its well being than they; that almost any of the more important departments of the whole, would suffer grievously if there were no garbage men.

That knowledge should at least give them the feeling of being necessary and important; which, after all, means happiness and contentment in any job.



THE CLUTCHING HAND

Hepsibah explained to her mistress that the reason she was late to work one morning was because she had been getting her no-account fourteen-year-old son, Eustace, out of jail. He had been caught tiefing. It was the third time she had had to perform such rescue work.

“He trouble is that he is too grabicious, Mistress,” said Hepsibah with a sigh. “He just can’t let nothing alone, and I fear his grabiciousness going to cause him reely bad trouble some day!”



THE CLEAN SWEEP

As I pursue my brisk and more or less blithe way to work in the early mornings, I often pass or meet another worker, the beginning of whose day of toil coincides somewhat with my own.

As cogs in the sociological scheme, our orbits are as widely separated as the poles, but despite that, we seem to have much in common. Not only I, personally, but all of us. You and you and you.

The man I refer to is an old colored street sweeper who pushes his little wheeled dump cart with its flanking accessories of shovel and broom, along the street in a seemingly endless round of trying to make and keep the world looking better than it would, were it not for his efforts.

He is little and bent and old. Bent from stooping to pick up so many carelessly strewn scraps of paper, mango skins, and other refuse which a

careless world has left to mark its heedless meanderings through the days.

Rheumatism evidently long ago laid its cold hand upon his joints, because he moves with the plodding doggedness of one to whom muscular movement long ago ceased to be anything but a chore. Perpetually weary, he drives his laggard limbs into a sort of shuffling shamble as he alternately pushes his little wheeled equipage ahead of him, or uses it as something upon which to rest his gnarled, weary hands.

Not always has he been a street sweeper. Years ago he was probably one of the gay young blades who spent their sunshine hours at some work calling for bodily strength and skill; and then when evening had come with its blessed relief from the heat and toil of the day, laughed and flirted with the dark-hued belles of their happy, careless world. One earned money and one spent it. Grandly and with a gesture. For what else was money ever intended? Old age? Pshaw! Time enough to think of that a hundred years or so in the future.

He has probably experienced during the many years he has lived, every emotion which life has to offer those who tread its pathways—joy, sorrow, love, happiness, hate, and despair. He has held his precious babies in his arms and has seen

loved ones close their eyes in death—the little closed cycle of life to which every human entity is entitled.

Now that fortune has passed him by, however, and the years are resting heavily on his bent shoulders, he dwells largely with his memories. And his job gives him ample time to live over and over again, the high lights of a career which to him, at least, was one colorful and exciting.

There was a time, he remembers wistfully, when he walked along whistling, looking up at the tree-tops with their bits of sky peeping through the branches; instead of plodding with a perpetually down-cast head, looking always for some bit of street refuse which he must stop to collect, oblivious of the grass and flowers blooming along his pathway.

We self-styled superiors in intellect, social status, and what-not, pursue a daily routine not so radically different from his. We look for wrongly figured tabulations in lieu of scattered banana skins; misplaced files rather than crumpled papers; imperfect weldings in machinery instead of mango seeds; and errors in English composition in place of mud deposits left by the rains.

There are few of us who, also, have not become so preoccupied in looking for the mistakes of others that our eyes unconsciously have a down-

ward slant instead of being trained steadfastly on the heights. We, too, searching painstakingly for tell-tale evidences of another's heedlessness, all too often fail to see roses blooming at our very feet.

Sociologically we are all street sweepers. Trundling along through the world, trying to make it a better looking place by bending our efforts toward gathering up and doing away with the mistakes of others. And in the final analysis, the reward of all street sweepers is pretty much the same!



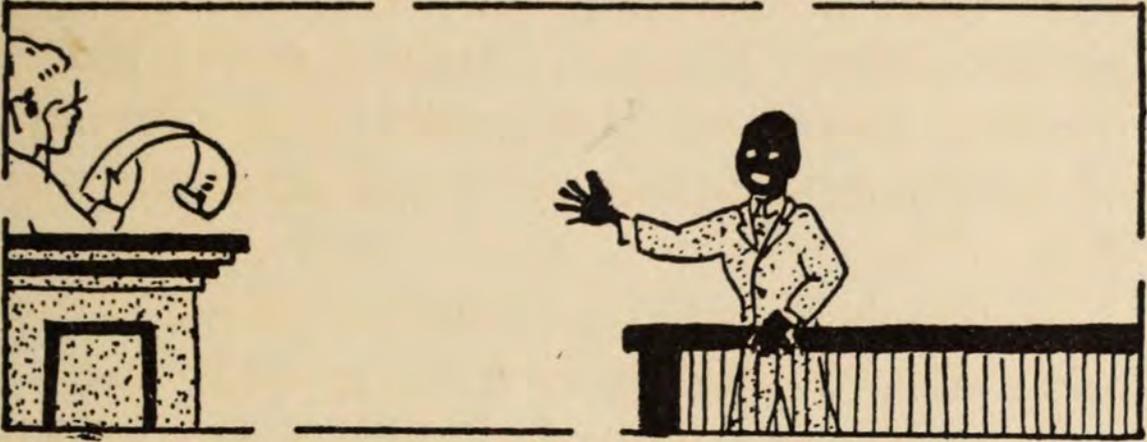
PENETRABLE MATTER

Lola was complimented by the boss of the house upon the success of a dish she had prepared successfully, after only one instruction. Smiling smugly, she replied, "Me head hard; but not too hard for dat!"

THE HERMIT TOUCH

The Hortons had a house guest for the weekend. Mrs. Horton, coming downstairs after dressing for dinner, asked if the gentleman had yet appeared.

"No'm, not yet," replied Ollie. "He still isolate himself!"



AS DECEASED AS A DOOR NAIL

DURING the Cristobal Court's discussion of the last will and testament left by a Silver City worker who had recently died, the word "deceased" was frequently used.

Since the sum total of effects to be administered was small, and since the only living relative on the Isthmus was a brother, the case was an easy one to settle; nothing to it.

Just as the judge had started to make his summary of the case, however, there was an interruption from among the audience of colored people ranged at the front of the room.

"Please, yo' Honor, Suh," said a small black man, stepping diffidently forward, "Ah's dat deceased brother!"



QUERY FROM THE SILVER SIDE

Money h'order, is dis where you git de stamps?



THE TIE THAT BINDS

EXCEPT in the Canal Zone where the formality is obligatory, there is considerable disposition on the part of the colored people in our midst, to dispense with the rites of matrimony in their marital relations. Looking upon a wedding ceremony as a purely social occasion, they do not consider marriage by any means an important fore-runner to a couple's setting up housekeeping together.

The reason for the omission of the marriage ceremony is chiefly financial. The combined matrimonial taxes of Church and State are frequently more than they can afford, and they can't be censured too severely for dispensing with an expensive formality which means little to them.

Legal bonds do not hold people together, however, and fidelity is probably quite as general among the colored people's common-law marriages, as though they were tightly bound in the

eyes of the law and of the church. An agreement, matrimonial or otherwise, need not be registered in a court book or the Bible to make it mutually binding upon the two parties concerned.

This truth was brought home rather forcibly some time ago by a story told me by a friend who had attended a colored wedding where he was the chiefest and most impressive guest of honor; the crowning touch of glory for the affair, to be exact.

The groom in question was an aged worker who had called this friend "Boss" for many years; and the ancient bridegroom's happiness in his wedding was increased ten-fold by having his beloved boss-man present at the most important function of his life.

The story started some thirty years ago when Mose and Mariah were husky young colored folks lately arrived from Jamaica. They had fallen in love and wanted to be married, but in order to do it up brown, as a "wedding" and not just a marriage, they needed twenty-five dollars. Which they didn't have.

Reasoning logically enough that they could have the marriage ceremony later, when they could afford it, they decided to be married folks anyway. They both wanted the ceremony, however, and decided to have it just as soon as they could save the necessary money.

Fate was not kind to them in the matter, however. Time after time as the years passed, their little savings box would just about have the required balance, when a baby would get sick, or a six-year-old would break an arm, and doctor bills would eat up the carefully hoarded wedding fund.

Birth, death, food, and clothing, managed for over thirty years to keep Mose and Mariah from realizing their mutual and never-forgotten dream of a fancy wedding with veil, stove-pipe hat, and all the trimmings. They raised a big family and did well by them as they were able, however, and at last the day came when the youngest child, finally, was out from under foot.

The economic relief afforded by the growing-up of their offspring enabled Mose and Mariah at last to complete the little nest egg which they had so long been striving to accumulate. And then, with the thrill of realizing a thirty-year-old dream, they set about preparations for their long-delayed wedding.

Truly splendiferous was the account of this function. The bride scintillated under orange blossoms and a flowing veil, while the groom was impressive in a swallow-tailed coat and a high silk hat. Three sons acted as ushers, and two small black grandchildren carried the train of the bride's sweeping satin wedding gown.

Everything went as per schedule, and the fact that it was a life-time dream realized, only added to the wedded couple's enjoyment of the occasion. Nor was their zestful appreciation of its magnificence dimmed by the fact that, next day, Mose had to report to his watchman's job, while Mariah went back to her tubs and ironing board.



FRACTIONAL EQUIVALENTS

During the process of having a tailored suit made down town a year or so ago, I found I needed a bit of extra material for pockets.

When the polite colored clerk at the suiting counter asked how much material I would need, I said I imagined it would require about a third of a yard.

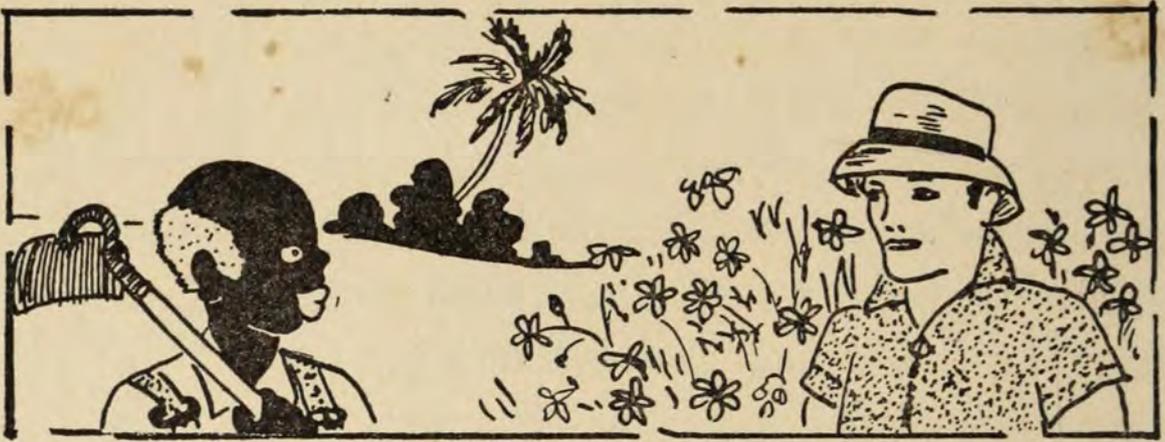
"But, Ma'am," he said politely regretful, "we don't third! You must either half or quarter!"

I "halved."

DROWSY WATERS

Gwendolyn, the cook, was instructing a new kitchen helper.

"You mus' always empty the water outa the tea kittle of a morning," said she. "Water no good when it been sleeping in the kittle all night!"



LINES OF COMMUNICATION

JEEKS has been the Smiths' gardener for a long time. He takes care of a little plot of land out of town for them; raises flowers, vegetables, and a few chickens. It gives the old fellow, no longer able to hold down a regular job, a place to stay and a little money.

Not long ago the boss man drove out one Sunday and found a bed of cosmos in full bloom.

"Well, for goodness' sake, Jeeks," he said in pleased surprise, "I had forgotten all about those cosmos. Are these from the seed I gave you two years ago?"

"Oh, no sir!" Jeeks replied. "They's the descendants!"

"How do you mean, 'descendants'?" the white gentleman asked with a twinkle in his eye.

"W'y, descendants, sir; descendants!" the old fellow said earnestly, endeavoring to kindle a

little spark of knowledge in the arid desert of the white man's mind. "Them first ones, you know, kinda circulated a bit; put they roots down into the soil and went circulatin' a while. And now, these is their descendants. You know, sir . . . descendants!" he added, with a sly wink.

And, finally, the Sir admitted that, yes, he knew. Descendants!



AMBITION UNHAMPERED

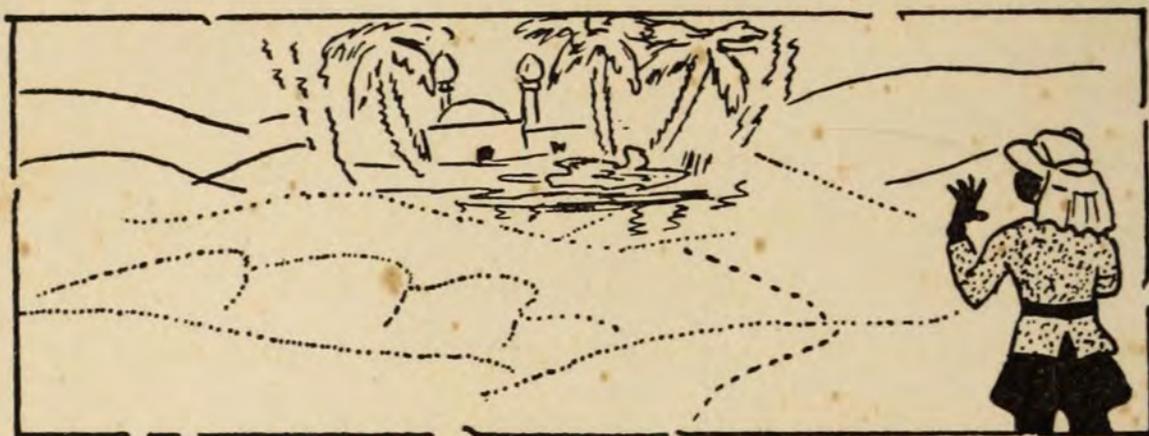
Theodosius had a son who was ambitious to become a member of the Salvation Army. Theodosius, being a modern-minded father, believed in permitting children to decide such matters for themselves.

"Far be it from me to stifle his gumption!" he said grandly.

APRIL SHOWERS

Mr. Anderson had run his car only half-way into the garage because he expected to leave again shortly. Something occurred, however, to change his plans and the car was just left as was. A heavy rain came up in the afternoon, and Dorcas came rushing in, greatly perturbed.

"Your car still wetting, Mr. h'Anderson!" she informed him.



FADING VISTAS

HAWKINS has not always been just a janitor at the men's bachelor quarters. There was a time, years ago, when, briefly, he touched the dizzy height of high adventure; living thrillingly and dangerously—as all gods and men are entitled to do at least once in their lives. Hawkins, in short, was in the World War.

He enlisted when the United States tossed her hat into the ring, and with a proud regiment of his brother West Indians, sailed away for the land of the fleur de lis. He served in a number of places and subsequently found himself in Egypt; a member of the Legions on the Nile.

Returning to the Isthmus after hostilities were over, he basked luxuriously in the sunny approval granted all heroes come home from wars afar. Many brave tales he had to tell of his adventures during the two years he had been gone, and the

white gentlemen whom he janitored were by no means the least enthusiastic of his listeners. They liked his yarns, and especially the ones he had to tell about his stay in the land of the Pharaohs.

Straightening around, one evening, when a small group of his gentlemen were gathered for a pre-dinner highball, they asked him to tell them something more about his trip overseas. What, for instance, was the strangest thing he saw while over there?

Nothing loath, Hawkins scratched his woolly head a moment and then without hesitation, said, "I specks the most oddest thing I sees over there, was them there meerges. Yes suh, a meerge is a mighty peculiar thing!"

He was pressed to explain what a "meerge" was, although his listeners knew very well to what he was referring.

"Well, you see," his brow was creased in heavy concentration as he groped for words to express what he wanted to say. "W'en you'se out in that ole desert, they jes' ain't nothin'. Jes' sand! Eve'ywhere you looks, it is still jes' ole sand. Then all to onct you looks 'way off yonder, and you sees some palm trees, and some water under 'em. You sees it jes' as plain as you sees that bed over there!"

"Yes, yes, go on!" he was encouraged by his listeners.

"My, *MY!*" he shook his head and made a few little clucking noises by way of bespeaking the wonder he still felt about the mystery of a "meerge." He went on speaking.

"Well, w'en you sees all them palm trees in that ole desert, you starts toward 'em pretty fast. And you walks and you walks and you walks. And all time you see them trees and the water. And then—" he paused dramatically, rolling his eyes heavenward by way of emphasis, "W'en you gits right up to it—it don't!"



THE CYCLE OF LIFE

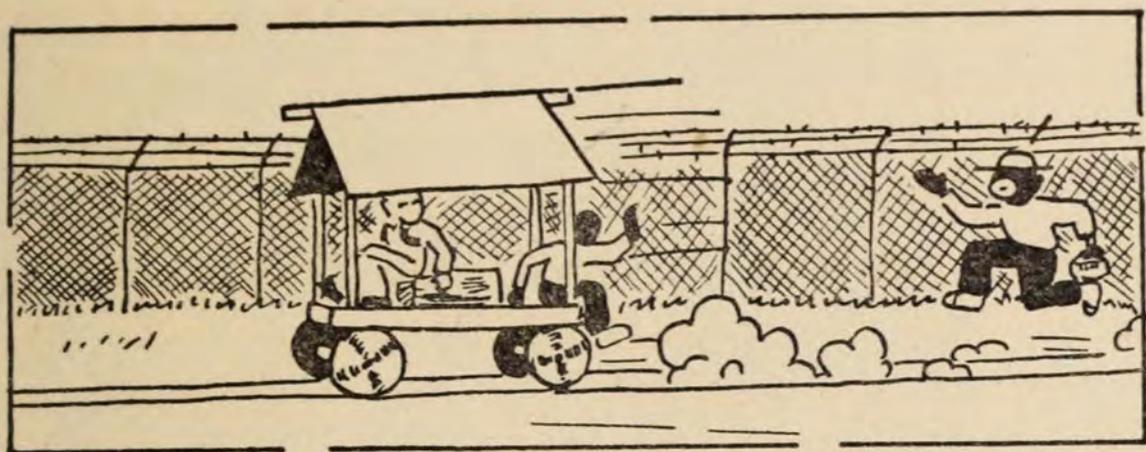
Clarissa's master commented upon the fact that sometimes her pies were excellent; and at others, not so good.

"De han' come and de han' go!" Clarissa told him, cheerfully agreeing with his opinion.

THE DRUDGERY OF LIFE

Horatius, a huge Barbadian, presented himself at the Dredging Division office one day.

"I craves a job working on de drudge," he informed the clerk who asked him what he wanted.



THE HELPING HAND

A FOREMAN with his gang of silver laborers was returning to Balboa yard from the Amador section one afternoon on a hand car. Slowing down while passing the shop area, the boss looked around and saw a colored laborer, dinner pail in hand, racing breathlessly to catch up. One of the boys on the hand car was beckoning him on; encouraging him to run still faster.

“Hey there, Jeff, what the devil are you doing, anyhow?” the foreman demanded.

“I jes’ a-helping him a little, Sar,” explained Jeff smoothly, but with an inner grin.

“Well, what you doing that for? You know damn well we can’t pick up passengers!” was the rather exasperated reply.

“Oh yes Sar, Boss, I knows dat,” Jeff answered ingeniously. “But you see, Boss, if’n him run a w’ile, him git home quicker!”



AN ISTHMIAN HEARTACHE

IN a world where hardships, suffering and sorrow seem to fill up the heavier side of the scales, one sensitive to his surroundings can't escape seeing things here every day which wrench his heartstrings grievously. Sights which force him to shut the eyes of his soul to what is before him, because he is helpless to remedy matters; and in that way only, can he maintain peace within his secret self.

One of the things which always casts a slight shadow over the day, are these aged Jamaican fruit and vegetable peddlers who so constantly tread the streets of the Zone, seeking for customers who are few and far between. They pause at each doorstep with pathetic humility, asking the lady of the house to buy some of their wares. And they accept a refusal with such patient resigna-

tion; as though hopelessness were the constant companion of their wanderings.

The margin of profit from a little basket of vegetables balanced on the head of a weary street plodder, or carried in a market basket on a shaky old arm, must be very, very small, indeed. And think how frightening to know each morning that unless one can dispose of this little store of supplies, he will go without food for the day!

With cars as common as they are, it is but natural that the average housekeeper should go periodically to the Chinese gardens or to the market to stock up with fruits and vegetables enough to last several days. And even though it wrenches her heart to say, "No," to the numerous peddlers that appear at her door, there is little else she can do.

Among the stream of such itinerant vendors that pass in a constant procession to and from my own hilltop apartment house, there is one feeble old grandfather who appears almost every morning with a big basket of oranges on his arm. He is tottery and unsteady of gait, and usually sits on the steps of each house for a little while to rest before picking up his burden again—a load which, though small, is almost too much for his frail old strength.

Life has not treated him very kindly. That is

evidenced by his gnarled old hands, his bent shoulders, his patched and shabby clothes. During his days of exuberant vitality, he donated physical strength, his only capital, in answer to the world's insistent demand for brawn. Now, his strength gone, and no longer of any use, he is left stranded; a battered, worn-out shell tossed carelessly upon the world's economic beaches—just a poor old Jamaican laborer who, after a lifetime of hard, poorly paid toil, now finds himself hungry and penniless.

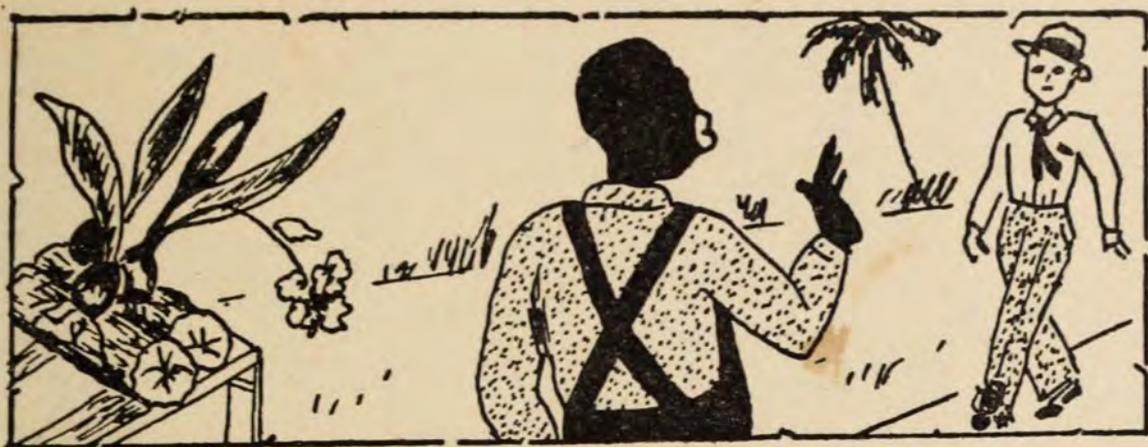
There are so many of them. One can't help them all; can't buy un-needed little bunches of fruit or greens from every peddler that comes to her door. And yet—! That look of patient hopelessness in the eyes of an old person who is so helplessly at the mercy of a thoughtless, hurrying world, can cast a shadow over the whole morning when one has to shake her head because of an already over-stocked kitchen.



BOSSY'S UNDERSTUDY

"Is that canned milk in the small pitcher?" asked Mr. Branden, sugaring his breakfast cereal.

"No sir, it cow milk!" replied Theresa, passing it over.



THE MIRACLE

MR. CLARK had an orchid garden. Myers, an old colored man, helped him care for it. One year they had a rather rare specimen which they both watched avidly; waiting with ill concealed impatience for it to bloom.

Finally a bud appeared, and it was difficult to say which of the two gardeners was the more enthused; Mr. Clark, or his first lieutenant.

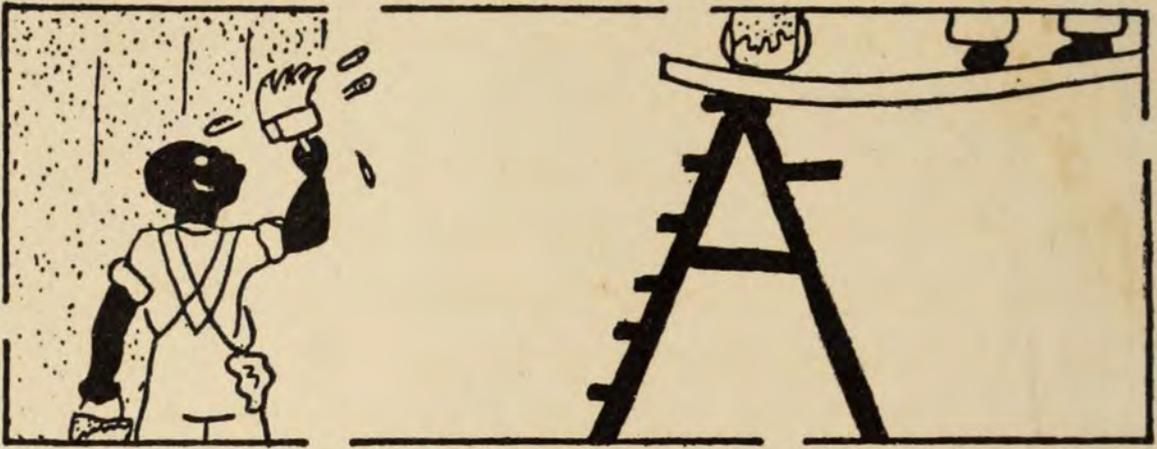
A morning or so after the appearance of the bud, old Myers hastened to meet his boss-man as he sauntered out to the garden before going to work.

“It hyatch out, Capt.!” he exclaimed jubilantly. “The new bud, she done hyatch out las’ night!”



SUPERFLUOUS LOQUACITY

Too much you talk wid de mouth, Mon, and don’t say a t’ing!



WHEN THE LILY IS GILDED

SOME of our colored brethren who help in their various ways toward the smooth functioning of the great Canal organization, are a source of never-ending interest to me. I find intriguing their speech, their habits of dress, their very peculiar way of doing things, and their leak-proof guarantee against over-work in the hot sun; the ability to move at one certain pace in spite of all the pushing which any white boss may do.

I have much respect for these laborers as a whole. They are unfailingly kindly, polite and obliging. And in certain lines they are amazingly clever. Were I selecting any one class of them for unusual praise, I believe I should point unhesitatingly toward the paint gangs who move into our houses with their big pieces of burlap or canvas, and their cans of paint; and without dis-

turbing a thing, leave our houses tidy, clean, and smelling of fresh paint.

I have done enough painting to know what a messy job it is. Let me once decide to paint a kitchen chair, or lacquer a small table, and before the job is done, the whole house will serve as concrete evidence that a lonely accident in search of a place to happen, had found the ideal spot in my cluttered little domain.

I have had considerable experience with the Zone's paint gangs, and I shall never cease marveling at how they do it. They use very little paraphernalia; just a ladder, a piece of canvas, and a few buckets of paint; but they do their job as well as though they had on tap every painters' convenience yet devised to lighten the task and gladden the heart of a paint slinger.

Usually about all one does when the painters are due, is take the pictures off the wall and pull down the draperies. Since curtains always need washing, anyhow, this is seldom any extra work.

One is always a little jittery about her rugs and furniture, but. . . . "Oh, ma'am, there is no need to be apprehensive," you will be assured by a smiling black fellow in paint-splashed overalls. "We will cover it h'all up!"

And they do. A piece of canvas over Chinese or Persian treasures, the bigger pieces lifted care-

fully out of the way. When that section of the room is finished, a shift is made to another corner. Almost before one knows what is happening, the entire place is spic and span and new looking.

When things have to be moved, they are moved. And then put back again. Seldom if ever does a housewife find so much as a straw misplaced when she takes over after the paint gang has moved out. As artists at their job, they come as near to being top-notchers as anyone you could possibly name, offhand.



THE FRAILTY OF THE UPPER CRUST

Cecilia came to the table with a fresh pie which looked a trifle the worse for wear. One side of it was caved in considerably.

“What on earth happened to the pie, Cecilia?” her mistress said, startled a little. She had put it into the oven herself less than an hour before.

“It meet up with a blow as it come out the oven, Mum,” said Cecilia regretfully.

THE SOCIAL TREND

A 1927 social item from the West Indian Page: “Mr. and Mrs. Alfonso Trellis and their daughters, Cascara and Vaselina, spent the day with friends in Red Tank Sunday.”



THE DIVIDING LINE

KATE, first wash woman I had on the Isthmus, outlined for me during our initial conference, the various purchases I should make to start off our laundress-lady combination. She enumerated soap, starch, blueing, clothes pins, ironing board, iron, washboard and tub.

Kate was a particular lady of definite convictions, and gave me careful instructions as to the exact brand of each commodity which she preferred. Wishing to please her, I made careful note in order not to make a mistake in their purchase. She liked yellow soap, for instance; bulk starch, cake blueing which could be tied up in a little cloth and pulverized; and a wooden wash board. One could get them at the Cheno's, she said. Tin and glass ones were hard on the hands.

"Now about the tub," I asked after I had

jotted each of the other specifications. "What size tub do you want?"

She stood with hands on her hips in rapt absorption for a few minutes, thinking it over.

"Miss," she said finally, speaking with great deliberation, so I could not possibly misunderstand (because white people really are pretty dense at times, you know!) "They is two species of tubs. There is the big species, and there is the little species. I prefers the little species, if you please!"

So I purchased the small species of wash tub. It was highly satisfactory to both of us.



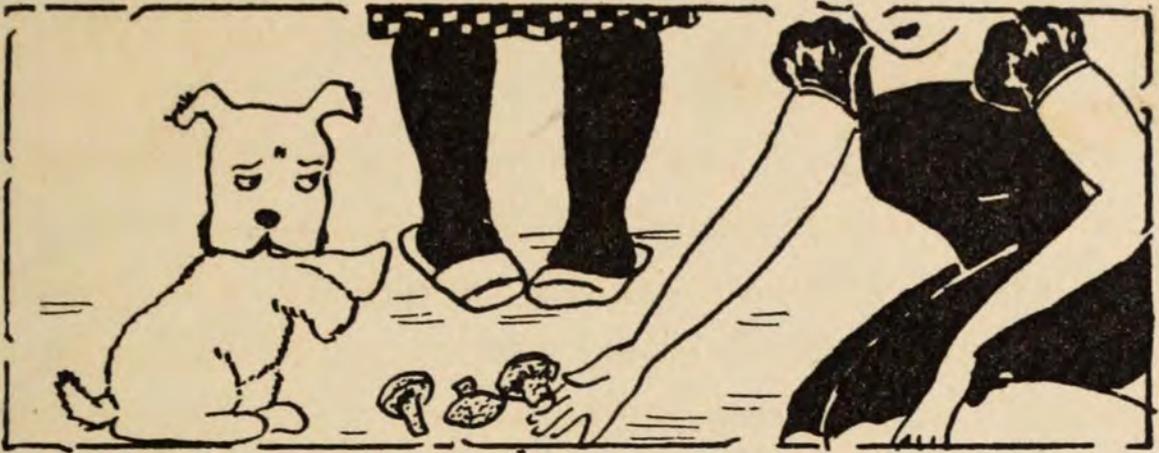
ETERNAL VIGILANCE

Mrs. Harris was having some painting done. Before she left for a call, she told the painter and two maids to be sure and tell her, when she returned, if some more paint was needed, so she could get it that afternoon. The paint shop was to be closed for two days due to a holiday.

One maid, "I will pay notice, Ma'am!"

Second maid, "I will be sure to observe it, Ma'am!"

Painter, "Ma'am, I will scrutinize the matter minutely!"



RETRIBUTION

ONE of my favorite maid-mistress stories is compounded of a strange conglomeration of ingredients . . . an opinionated Jamaican maid named Rozelia, a social-minded Army lady at a near-by post, a mess of fresh mushrooms, a choice assortment of ladies and gentlemen in evening attire, a pooch named Fido; and, lastly, of all things, an Army truck. One of these great big rip-snorting covered wagons that go helling around corners to scare the living daylights out of all of us.

The Army lady who told me the story, was pulling off an especially swank dinner party one evening and had included in her menu, for reasons best known to herself, fresh mushrooms. She had found some right good looking ones at the commy and had carried them home in high fettle,

because one doesn't often find them on local market shelves.

Her elation was short-lived, however, because when she reached home, she ran into a snag in the form of her cook, Rozelia. Rozelia had a superstition which forbade the frying of fresh mushrooms. And you probably know, yourself, what it means when one runs up against a Jamaican superstition in a strong-minded colored lady.

The hostess-to-be stood by her guns and refused to retreat in spite of Rozelia's stubbornness. She had planned fresh mushrooms, and fresh mushrooms she intended to serve. Rozelia finally gave in, but took one last shot that hit home. "Anyways, Ma'am," she glowered darkly, "they's not mushrooms anyway. Them's toadstools!"

By hereditary instinct, we all secretly distrust mushrooms to the very bottom of our souls, even when we know they are above reproach. The seed of suspicion thus sown, upset our lady's equilibrium considerably. She did not let on, but she *was* a little worried. Refusing to hoist a white flag, however, she directed Rozelia to fry two or three of the mushrooms and they would feed them to Fido. If they didn't hurt him, the guests should have the rest of them that evening . . . and that was all there was to it.

A few hours later, Fido was still wagging an animated tail and apparently enjoying the very best of health. Therefore, the dinner preparations moved along as per schedule, in spite of Rozelia's dour mutterings that "They won't no good come of it!" as she went darkly about her work.

During the table chit-chat which is the customary procedure upon such occasions, our lady entertained her guests with a graphic account of the Battle of the Mushrooms. (You know how we all recount the idiosyncrasies of our kitchen helpers!); and described laughingly how they had passed the buck to Fido, making him serve as an involuntary guinea pig of the affair.

Her story was just ended when, during the laughter it occasioned, Rozelia, with distended eyeballs and a stricken face, burst precipitously into the room to announce dramatically, "Miz Brown, Fido is as daid as an aig!"

Well . . . there is no need to describe the scene that followed. The hostess was horrified, and several of her guests proceeded promptly to get very, very sick. It was, taken all in all, considerable of a shambles.

In the midst of the anguished exclamations, the frantic calling for a dispensary doctor, or an ambulance, or *anything*, the hostess summoned Ro-

zelia to ask her where Fido was. Had she seen him herself as he was dying? And did he suffer much?

“Yes’m, I reckon he suffer plenty w’ile he was a-sufferin’,” Rozelia replied dolefully, “but it din’t last long. That ole Army truck went right smack over him; and I’ll tell you, Miz Brown,” and her voice sank to a confidential whisper, “they jes ain’t nothing lef’ of him. He’s all mash-up!”



FAN MAIL FOR TIBBETTS

A friend was playing a Lawrence Tibbetts record, “The Glory Road,” on the victrola. A colored carpenter, working in the house, stood listening in anything but rapt admiration for a spell and then asked, “Whut sort of song you call dat, Ma’am? Sound like de mon in great distress!”

REASSURANCE

Blossom is a cheerful, stolid Jamaican lady who works for a Cristobal friend.

One day when her mistress gave a shriek at sight of a small mouse scurrying across the floor, Blossom spoke concernedly, but with intent to reassure her.

“You ’fraid it, Mist-ress?” she said with concealed amusement. “It don’t dangerous!”



MEDIOCRITY

THE West Indian version of our idiomatic figures of speech is an interesting one and, oftentimes, more expressive than the English way of saying the same thing. There is one such expression of which this is especially true.

When asked how we like our job, how our health is, or how we are getting along in general, our answer is quite likely to be, "Oh, so-so!"; meaning that while there is no cause for going into deep mourning, maybe, there still and all are no special grounds for uttering wild hallelujahs of joy over the existing state of affairs.

A West Indian worker, being asked such a question, gives the same sort of informative reply by saying, "Oh, come soon; come soh!"



THE VIOLENT LIFE

Yes, Mon, me chuck him down wid a rockstone!



LABOR'S UTOPIA

WITH a more or less sincere antipathy for jobs in general, I have never supposed that any one specific occupation, providing it were obligatory and regular, would appeal to me particularly. Which only goes to show that one never knows—!

For, believe it or not, I have at last seen one worker whom I envy. His is a job, but its pleasant features so far out-number the more objectionable ones, that my instinctively grim attitude toward steady toil relaxes somewhat when I pass him ambling about the landscape; and I sigh wistfully as I walk reluctantly toward my own so much more terrifically arduous niche in the day's affairs.

The fellow I envy is one who saunters about the countryside picking up little scraps of paper by means of a nail at the end of a stick. It is, so far as one is able to judge, the perfect and ideal job.

He never hurries. What is the use of hastening from one spot, when all he will find when he reaches the next one, is just another scrap of paper?

Most jobs exact a toll either of physical strength or mental exertion—often a combination of both. His does neither. A scrap of paper weighs very little, and to get it he doesn't even have to bend over. Just a slow-motion, leisurely jab with his nail-equipped lath; a push with his thumb to poke it into the little receptacle he carries. That is all there is to it.

My worker, being a black man who conserves his energy, doesn't even waste that thumb motion with every paper he finds, but waits until he has a dozen or so clustered on his nail like hot dogs on a skewer. Then, leisurely, he ambles over to the nearest garbage can, disposes of his gleanings and then shuffles on his way once more.

Grudgingly I concede one fly in the ointment of this otherwise perfect job. He does have to lift the lid of the garbage can—and there seems no way round that obstacle! If there were, I feel sure my brother in toil would have solved it ere now, because I have seen him stand and gaze abstractedly at that lid for as much as five minutes at a time; wondering, no doubt, just how that top could be made to come off without his having to

lift it up. Since he seems to have found no solution for this problem, I logically presume there is none.

But—what is lifting one garbage-can lid if it doesn't have to be done more than a half dozen times a day? I believe even I could do *that* without grumbling—much!



THE RIDDLE UN-RIDDLED

Conversation heard between two maids meeting outside the hospital after visiting hours.

“Hi, Josie, you know dat Ruby got a baiby?”

“No, you don't tole me! What it is?”

“Guess!”

“ 'Tis a boay?”

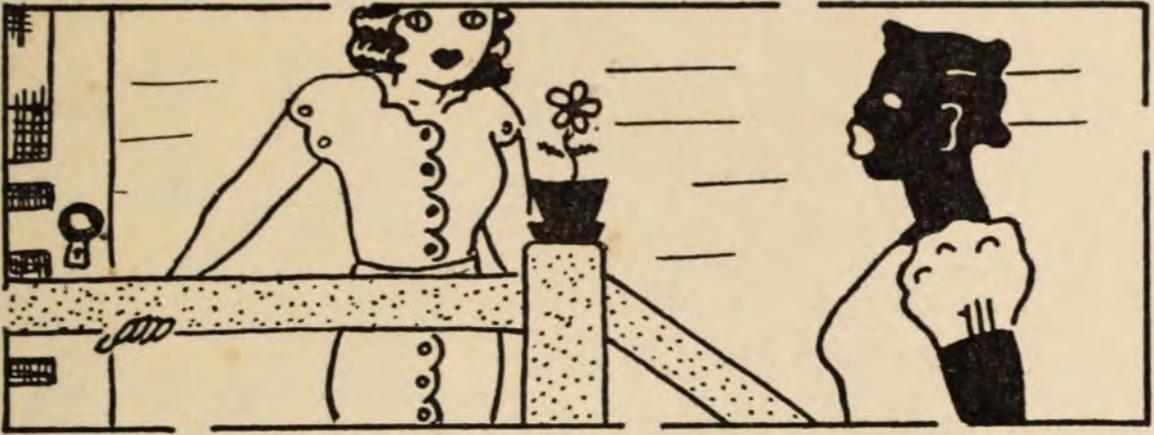
“No. Guess again!”

“Gurl!”

Suspiciously, “Who tole you?”

RIDDLE OF THE SPHINX

Erasmus, discussing the eternal question of what lottery number to play, “Boss, I can get de right numbers, but I cawn't get they in de right h'order. I sure I can beat dat dom Duque, though, if'n I jes study whut to put to de back; whut in de front; and whut to put in de midst!”



NOT THE LITTLEST SPARROW

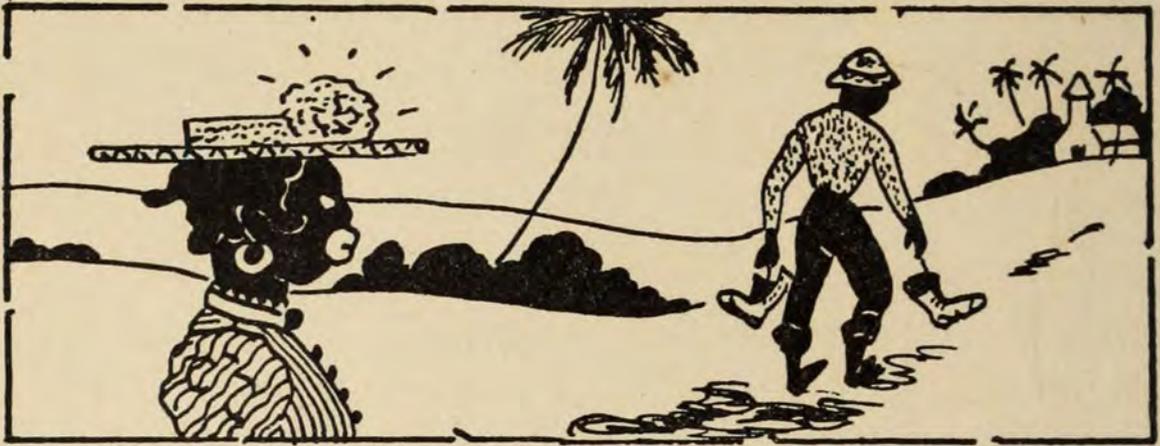
LORALIA was applying for a job as laundress at the home of a lady in Old Cristobal. She looked neat and capable, and the lady was inclined to give her a trial. Just on general principles, she asked a few routine questions which is the customary procedure under such circumstances.

“Have you a family?” she asked pleasantly, during the course of the interview. She was assured that, yes, definitely, Loralia had a family—six children!

“Oh, then you are a married woman!” was the smiling comment of the lady.

“Oh, no’m, I’m not married,” Loralia replied with cheerful frankness. “No’m, I’m not married; but I hasn’t been overlooked!”





THE MILLINERY ART

MRS. MORRISON came to the Isthmus as a bride during construction days. Life is exceedingly easy and pleasant for women who live here, now, but it was far from that, in the "old days." A woman had to be made of nothing short of tempered steel to make the grade under conditions prevalent during the infancy of the Big Ditch.

Among the multitudinous trials to be endured during that busy, gusty period, was a shortage of ice, screens, fresh vegetables and decent sidewalks. And an over-abundance of mud, noise, and millions of insects and vermin running rife all over the place.

Another trial was the raw, inexperienced household servants who were the best to be had, then; brawny and cheerful, but appallingly ignorant black women fresh from the bush country of the various island hinterlands from which they had

come. Training and teaching them the habits and customs of American households was almost as much a job as the digging of Culebra Cut itself.

One of Mrs. Morrison's first "girls" was Jasmine, a bewildered and obtuse, but smiling lady from Barbados. What Jasmine knew about the ways of white folks could have been incorporated on the point of a needle without undue crowding. However, be it said to her credit, she was willing. So much so that she became practically one of the family, and stayed with them for fifteen years.

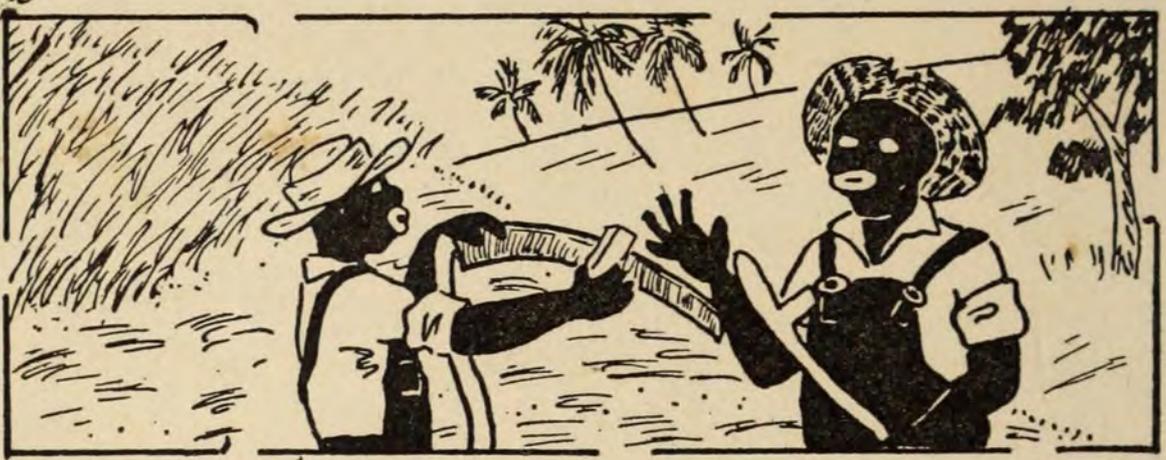
One of her lady's earliest memories of Jasmine harks back to the first Sunday she was with them. A day or so before, one of her boys upset a bottle of red ink on the kitchen table, and his mother, having nothing else handy, grabbed a sponge lying near, and mopped it up. The sponge, being brightly crimson, was tossed into the garbage pail.

Not to repose there unblossomed and unseen, however. On Sunday morning Mrs. Morrison spied it gayly and triumphantly decorating the hat of Jasmine as she went proudly off to church.



BALBOA RAILROAD STATION RECORDING

Back ahead dere, Mon; don't see de train coming so?



SEED TIME AND HARVEST

IT is grass-cutting time again up on my wind-swept hilltop. Like a man who has but recently returned from a camping trip, bushy and unshaven, our Reservoir slopes have been looking bristly for the past week or so, now. I think the sod must be as glad as I, to see the approach of the machette and scythe brigade.

I always enjoy these visits of the grass cutters. I like to watch the slow, leisurely arc of the flashing blades as the scythes are swung methodically by brawny, glistening black arms; and I admire the deft precision of the machette men who so effortlessly and carelessly cut their quota of edgy places as neatly as with a pair of scissors.

I like to listen to their incessant Jamaican chatter, their ringing peals of cheerful darky laughter; all mingling like a running arpeggio of

melody through the steady, twangy rhythm of whetstones on the blades of scythes.

I am glad my terraces are too steep for the mechanical mowers, because I so much prefer this laughing crew who, with scythe and machette, will transform the now unkempt bushiness of the hill, into the parallel of a smooth, closely shaven face . . . fresh, trim, immaculate.

Slowly, leisurely, placidly, the grass cutters work. No hurry, no confusion, no hectic rush to get done. Slowly and leisurely, but as inexorably as the march of Time itself, they spread themselves over the hill-top and, passing, leave it as clean-bitten as a field of corn after a locust scourge.

Occasionally I have felt impelled to pity the colored laborers who perform the ruder, more unpleasant tasks about us. Felt sorry that their toil must be so drab and monotonous. Watching the grass cutters at work, however, I completely reverse this attitude and wonder if there be any group of white workers on the Isthmus who get from their jobs the same measure of pleasurable contentment as do these unhurried sons of Ham.

The companionable chatting of men around a club table is theirs; from which their, at times, almost imperceptible movements, detract not at all. No worry about overhead, profits or loss;

no concern as to when the job shall be done; none of the heavier cares which worry and harass the hearts of their white superiors, are theirs, to trouble the peace of their morning hours. They have sunshine, birds, and congenial companionship all about; a boss who stands dreaming off at the distant hills—and peace.

I am not so sure that ours is a better niche in the world than that of the laughing, chattering grass cutters. If perhaps their scope of vision be limited, why check that up as a loss? Doors opened wider serve only to show more vistas that are beyond our hope and grasp; while knowledge but enables one to suffer the more keenly.

A mind free from worry; close contact with the sun and dew of the out-of-doors; dreams and laughter with his work. These, the grass cutter has richly and fully. Have we, of things really worth while, much more than this?



PAY-CAR INCIDENT

Laborer receiving his pay, found a tarnished half-dollar in the change.

“Me don’t want de black money, Sar,” he said worriedly. “Cause’n de China-mon him won’t take h’it!”



CHANGE; THE SPICE OF LIFE

AN acquaintance was making a few purchases in La Luna one day when an old colored man came apologetically in and laid a five-dollar bill diffidently on the counter.

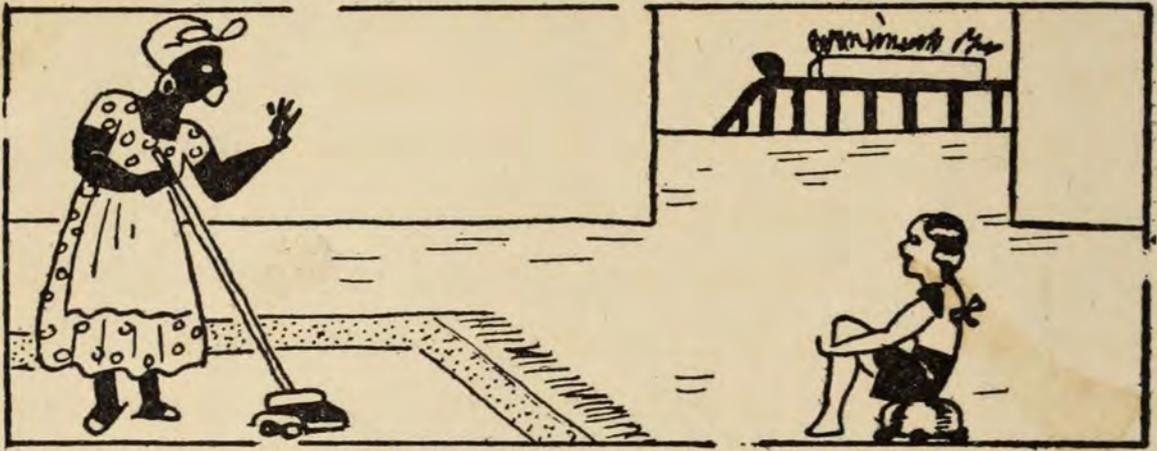
“Ah done like this heah big money mash-up, please, Suh!” he said politely.



SOAKED TO A TURN

Lastenia and her mistress were having a conference about a shortcake. They had taken it out of the oven, but were wondering if perhaps it shouldn't have been baked a little longer.

In the midst of the discussion, the phone rang. When Mrs. Carstairs came back from answering it, Lastenia said, “I fear it don't done enough, Mum, so I put it back in the oven to soak a while longer!”



AFTER ADAM

I HAVE a friend who is possessed of a jewel of a maid y-clept Rebecka. Her native land is Jamaica, although she has lived in Panama since she was a little girl and considers it her country. Her speech is a quaint mixture of the Jamaican's broad h'English, a smattering of Yankee talk picked up from various employers, and some of her adopted country's Latin expressions.

Rebecka has an inexhaustible store of old tales dealing with jungle gods and spirits and witches; stories which have been handed down from other generations to her, and probably decorated and embellished by each teller in turn until at the present time they would do credit to a Hans Christian Andersen.

Rebecka is a bit choosey about whom she favors with her stories, but if it happens that one stands in her good graces, and her mood is right, she has

a story for nearly every object that you can mention. She can tell tales explaining why bananas grow pointing upward; why pineapples have such thorny tops; why the hermit crab has no house of his own, and has to depend on what he can rustle in the way of a shell to cover him; why cocoanuts grow so tall; and why ants go marching through the forest with green leaf-umbrellas held over their heads.

Her stories are whimsically entertaining, and if they could be written down just as she tells them, inflection and all, a book of them would undoubtedly become the world's best seller. Repeated in unimaginative written prose, they lose much of their piquancy. However, there is one that intrigued me so much, that I shall repeat it. It tells why the palms of the hands and the soles on the feet of colored people are the same color as those of the white man.

"Long, long ago," says Rebecka, "Por Dios, so long a time it is that I can't say it, all peoples on earth had skins jus' the same! No black, no Indio, no Cheno. All white. All live out doors and hunt, fish for living. And, by'mby, get ver' crowded. Too many peoples in Bush.

"One day big Spirit Mans, boss of jungle, come along and he say, 'No good too many peoples all alike. Too much do all same thing. I change

that; put some in houses to do white folkses work. That leave other mans more room in Bush.'

"So jungle Boss, he move some peoples into houses and they stays there ever since. Still stay white people, too, cause don't need to change them color. White all-right color for live in houses.

"White no good for live in Bush, tho. So by'm-by Big Spirit he say, 'You come here, Bush Man. I give you better skin for live out of doors and hunt game. I jest empty this calabash of paint over you and then you won't worry no more 'bout old lion seeing you against green leaves. You too tall when stand up, though. Better get down on hands and knees!'"

The Bush man, then, according to Rebecka, crept forward on all fours, and the jungle sachem poured over him a great calabash of blackish brown paint that made a fine, shiny, dark covering, of which he was very proud. It didn't soil easily, could not sunburn, and made hiding among the trees easy as anything. In short, it was a very fine skin-suit for a man who was to live in the Bush.

"But, Madre Mia!" Rebecka threw up her hands and rolled her eyes dramatically in conclusion. "Por Dios, you no think what can happened? Bush man has his feets bottoms and his

hands down on ground when he got painted, and when he new suit all nice and dry and shiny, he stand up and see he still have white feets bottoms and white inside hands where paint didn't touch!"

With a dramatic sigh she put on the finishing touch. "Too bad, pobrecito, but too late then! No more paint—all used up! So—Bush mans ever since has to use hands and feets with no paint on they under sides. Too bad, caramba!"

And with a chuckle she waved me aside so she could get on with her sweeping.



NAMES MAKE NEWS

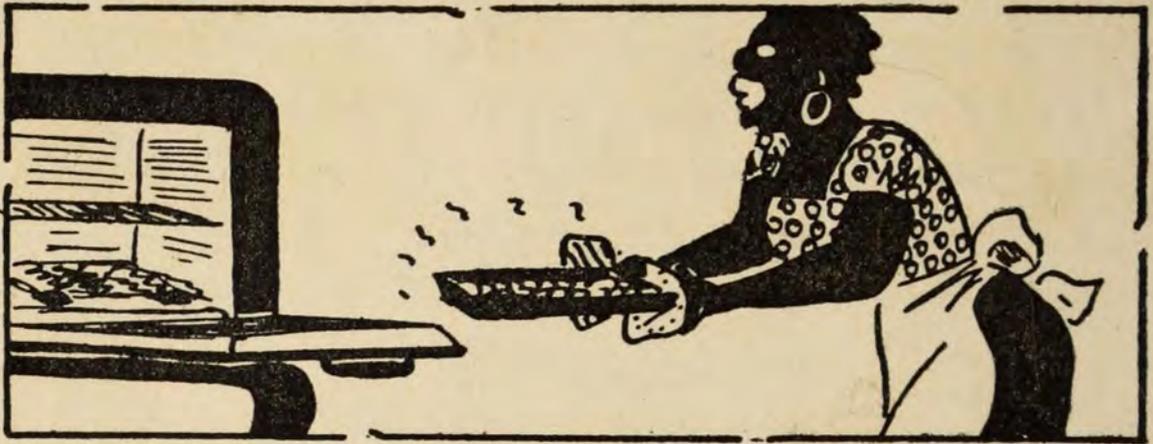
Note from construction-days colored bulletin: Ferdinand and Eliza Tuffles have named the recent addition to their family, Ferdiliza.

(In later years, Ferdiliza's baptismal moniker was corrupted to "Fertilizer"; by which title he was known as long as he worked on the Isthmus.)

ACCOMMODATION

Maisie, told that she could go home after she had served tea to her mistress and three bridge-playing friends, hesitated at the doorway.

"But, Mistress," she said in surprise, "don't you want I should stay to wash the wares?"



A ROSE BY ANY OTHER NAME

ARAMINTA has a tongue which serves her own needs admirably. The fact that it gets a bit confused and twisted over some of the funny words she has to use in talking white folks' talk, bothers her not at all. She doesn't even know it.

Years ago her mistress taught her to make Parker House rolls. She has made them, probably, a thousand times since then. To this day, however, they are "Powder House Rolls."

"Miz Laughlin," she'll beam when they start discussing a company dinner menu. "Supposin' I make some them Powder House rolls, instead of havin' jes bread?"

Mrs. Laughlin's habitual guests look forward with considerable pleasurable anticipation to Araminta's dinners—especially her Powder House rolls!



THE WRECK OF THE DESPERATE

IN 1906, when cantinas were popular Zone institutions, a customary aftermath of each day's work on steam shovel or dredge, was shaking for drinks in between the time one came off shift, and the hour he punched in on the domestic time clock. Naturally, as any man will well understand, these sessions occasionally elongated themselves into proportions which called later (much later!), for embarrassing sessions with the exasperated lady in charge of the home roost.

Men, being resourceful then, even as now, naturally used their wits to smooth the ruffled atmosphere by telling tall tales of floods, slides, fires and wrecks with which they had been doing battle, as explanation of their tardy appearance in the bosom of the home circle. And women, being smart then, even as now, swallowed such stories

with the conventional pinch of salt and with their tongues in their cheeks.

Mr. Grinnell recalls with a shudder the time he got rather deeply involved at Joe's Place, and realizing that it was a situation where a man couldn't very well quit and go home, sent a messenger to tell his wife that he would be late—on account of a wreck.

Mrs. Grinnell was an astute lady of some experience, and asked, not entirely convinced, "Where is that wreck, Warren?"

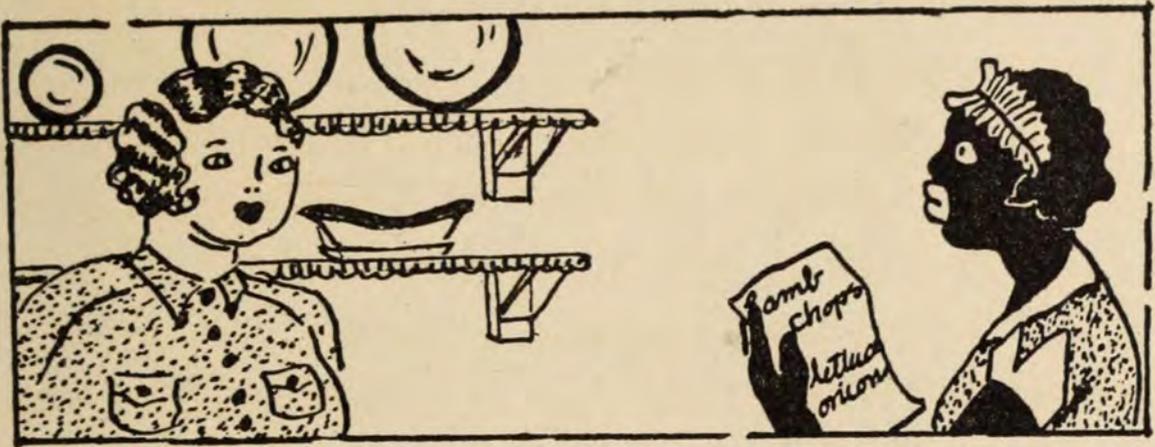
Warren truthfully shook his head. "Am doan know where de wreck, Mistress," he vowed. And then fled precipitately. Too precipitately. But he didn't intend no white woman questioning him too closely.

About a month later, the same thing happened. Warren again carried the message to Garcia by reporting his boss late on account of a wreck.

"Where is the wreck *this* time, Warren?" was the rather grim inquiry.

Warren for once was not caught unprepared. He had an answer to that one, all right, all right; and he gave it promptly and unhesitatingly.

"De wreck in de same place, Mistress!" he said emphatically—not to say, revealingly!



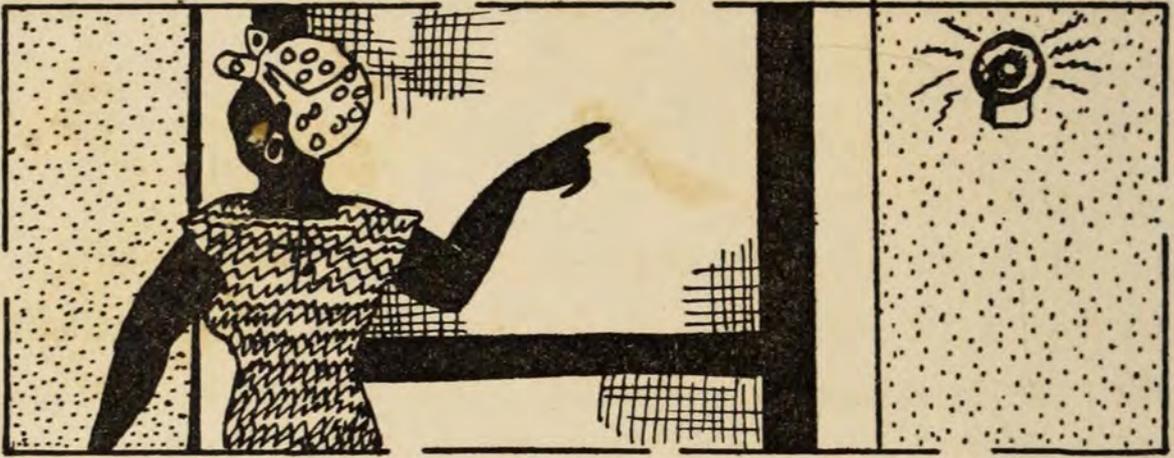
PAGING THE SILHOUETTE

MRS. STEIGEL was dieting. And, like so many ladies bent on reducing, she did considerable talking about it. So much so that everyone in the house, including Gertrude in the kitchen, had become acutely and jumpingly calorie-conscious.

Discussing the dinner menu one morning prior to the commissary trip, Gertrude seemed set on having lamb chops, for some particular reason best known to herself and God. Mrs. Steigel demurred a bit, because neither she nor her husband were exactly rabid about that particular form of meat. They almost never had it.

Gertrude seemed so set on the idea, however, that her mistress finally asked just why she wanted lamb chops all of a sudden, like that.

"Because, Ma'am," Gertrude explained with a great show of patient toleration, "dem doan fat you!"



DIAMOND NOT YET POLISHED

IRIS, an alert, capable maid, worked for the Marshalls for ten years. Then, having saved her money diligently during that interval, she decided to go on a visit to her home island of Jamaica.

Iris had a sister, Mandy, at home, who was anxious to come to Panama and get herself, also, a fine job; like the one Iris had. Some friends of the Marshalls promised to take her on trial if she came. They knew Iris would coach her, and if the two girls had many traits in common, she would surely make a fine maid.

In due time Mandy arrived. She was husky, black, inordinately cheerful, and eager to learn. She caught on readily and was thrilled to death over all the magic housekeeping aids in the Payne home . . . although rather terrified at some of the electrical gadgets.

She committed many blunders at first, natu-

rally; but laughed at herself quite as freely as the family did. She didn't often repeat the same mistake, however, and developed rapidly into a first-class maid.

Her vocabulary was a constant source of interest and amusement to the white folks about her; but instead of correcting and trying to change her, they encouraged her to keep on talking in her natural way.

To her a watch was a "pocket engine," and the family derived huge enjoyment from hearing her ask the son of the house, "Robbie, whut time it is by yo' pocket engine?"

It was quite patent that Mandy had not worn many pairs of shoes before she had come to Panama, and as soon as she arrived in the morning, she would shed them gratefully for soft, heel-less slippers. She referred to shoes as "ground mashers," and no one ever remonstrated with her when she would say, "Jes wait twell I puts on mi groun' mashas, and I be ready!"

When the boys of the family would tease or joke with her, she would laugh good naturedly and say, "Now you go 'way, Mistah Ed; doan yo' pappy-joke wit me!" Were we expressing the same thing in our more elegant diction, we would probably say, "Don't you kid me!"

A raincoat, to Mandy, was a "tent," and an

umbrella a "keep dry." "Here, Miss Marg'ret, honey," she would say, "Yo' betteh put on yo' tent cause it is aw ready startin' fo' to rain!" And one day when her mistress had gone down the street without either raincape or umbrella, Mandy exclaimed in consternation, "Good heavin, the rain come and Miz Payne don't got no tent ner neither no keep-dry wit her!"

Telling four-year-old Teddy to be careful, one day, she cautioned, "Betteh watch out there; you, Teddy. Gin you faw down, you goin' bus' yo' coco bone for true!"

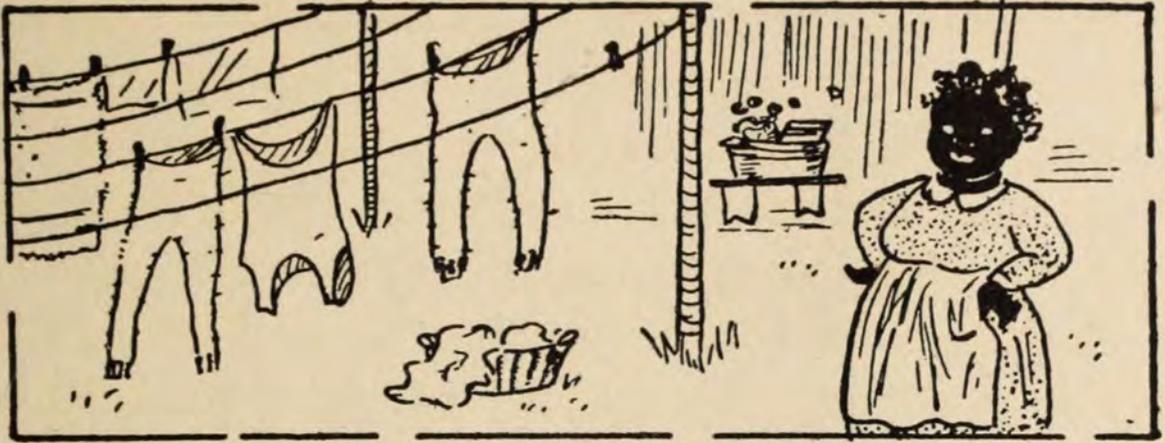
A collar was a "neck fence," and she never called a comb by its correct title. Instead, she would say, "Here, Teddy, let me straighen that neck fence. And jus' you give me that hair rake so I kin fix yo' up. Yo' hair all standin' on end!"

Of all the wonderful appurtenances of modernity about the house, however, the door bell was probably the most fascinating at first. One day shortly after her arrival, it rang, and Mandy, in palpitating excitement, hissed at her mistress on the back porch, "The button squealin', Miz Payne, the button squealin'!"



SLIVER COMMISSARY MEAT LINE

Shove off, Mon; make room for de nex' one!



SWUNG WITH THE WIND

HALLIE was doing the week's washing, when her mistress asked if she weren't about through.

"Yes'm, jus' about," Hallie replied cheerfully, looking up from her tubs. "All I has lef' to do, now, is the merinos!"

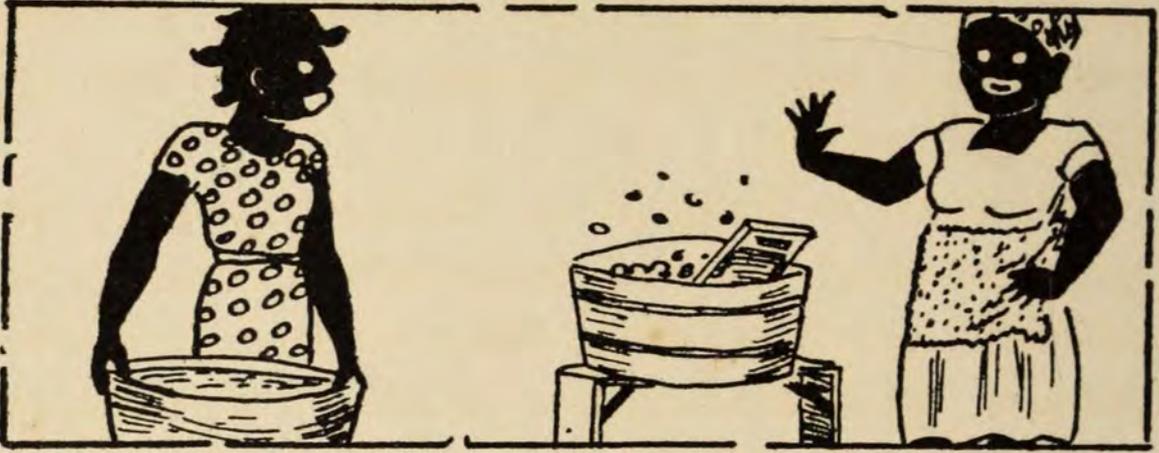
The be-puzzled lady immediately did a bit of mental research, aided by a little astute tub-poking. The result was that she found the *merinos* were her husband's knitted underwear!



PIES—WITH CRUST AND WITHOUT

The Bellamy's maid, Hester, was sent to the commy to get an apple or lemon pie. She came home empty-handed.

"Ma'am, de h'apple pie and de lemon pie all finish," she reported. "Only h'eskimo pie remain, Ma'am!"



THE CAT AND THE KING

FEW of us ever pause to consider in what light we appear to our West Indian servants; laundresses, cooks, and maids. Just what do they think of the way we dress, eat, walk, and talk over the telephone? They see us in the unpretentious frankness of our family life, and they watch us, often with a scornful inner smile, perhaps, when we are being our most charming selves in front of visitors.

If we have a sense of justice and fair play, or a niggardly streak of smallness in our natures, no one knows it so well as our colored helpers; who probably discuss such virtues or faults freely among themselves. We may keep the world from knowing about our stinginess, our ugly tempers, our arrogance, our generosity, our sense of humor or our goodness of heart; but we have no

such secrets from the maids who see us in every conceivable mood and temper as they serve us through the days.

Were we to listen in on discussions where we were the chief topic of conversation among our colored helpers, who are often shrewd character readers, we undoubtedly would be considerably enlightened, to say the least. Flattered, maybe; but not likely.

In connection with the foregoing, there comes to mind an incident told recently by a friend in Cristobal. Her laundress was formerly employed in a much more pretentious home than the one she now graces. Because of this, she carries herself with an air which, whatever else it may serve to accomplish, certainly does evoke from the maids about her, a most satisfying modicum of deference and respect.

The lady of the house sat at her window one day while her own laundress and several others in the neighborhood were chatting and gossiping as they rinsed and hung out their clothes. Her laundress was holding forth volubly with a revealing dissertation re the idiosyncrasies, personal faults and dubious merits of a former mistress, ——, referring to her in each instance by her Christian name!

Jane said this to them and Jane said that to

them, according to the speaker. And then Jane always wanted them to do thus and so; and Jane gave each of them a new dress one time. And another day, when some expected guests failed to arrive, Jane let the help eat the whole dinner themselves! Etc., etc., etc. Always referring to the lady as "Jane"!

Considerably amused and more than a little interested, the mistress of the house (wondering, incidentally, just what she herself might be called behind her back!), some time later beckoned the laundress and inquired the name of the "Jane" whom she had been discussing with some criticism, but a bit of affection.

"Oh, Jane So-and-so," replied the maid without the slightest hesitation or embarrassment.

My friend hastily sat down to fan herself. The lady referred to as "Jane," was the wife of a former Canal Zone governor!



CALL FOR FIRST AID

Henrietta came into the house in a state of great excitement.

"Sir," she said to the master of the home, "A cyar passing by, jus' now, did hit your fender and wound it sadly!"



THE UN-LOST CAUSE

A COLORED laborer who had worked a long while in the Shops area, was transferred to the Dredging Division. One day, after several years had gone by, he met his former boss on the Gamboa Bridge. The white man stopped in pleased surprise.

“Why, hello, Ben!” he said smiling. “How’s everything?”

“Oh, Mr. Van,” Ben replied as a shadow passed over his ebony countenance. “Not so good. Plenty trouble, Mr. Van; plenty trouble!”

“Why, what’s the matter, Ben? More babies?” The white man spoke with a twinkle in his eye. Ben formerly had evinced a notorious propensity for producing offspring in appalling numbers.

“Oh, no, Sar, she dry now,” Ben said with a prodigious sigh. “But she have fight with a

Bajan 'oman next door and them taken us to court!"

"You better be careful, Ben, or you go jail-house!" the white man said jokingly.

"Oh, no, Sar, I don't have to jail," Ben replied with a small ray of satisfaction breaking through his gloom. "I gits me a lawyer for five dollars and now I don't have to pay no fine nor go jail-house neither!"

"What you waste your money on lawyers for, Ben?" the former boss-man remarked. "I thought you were smarter than that!"

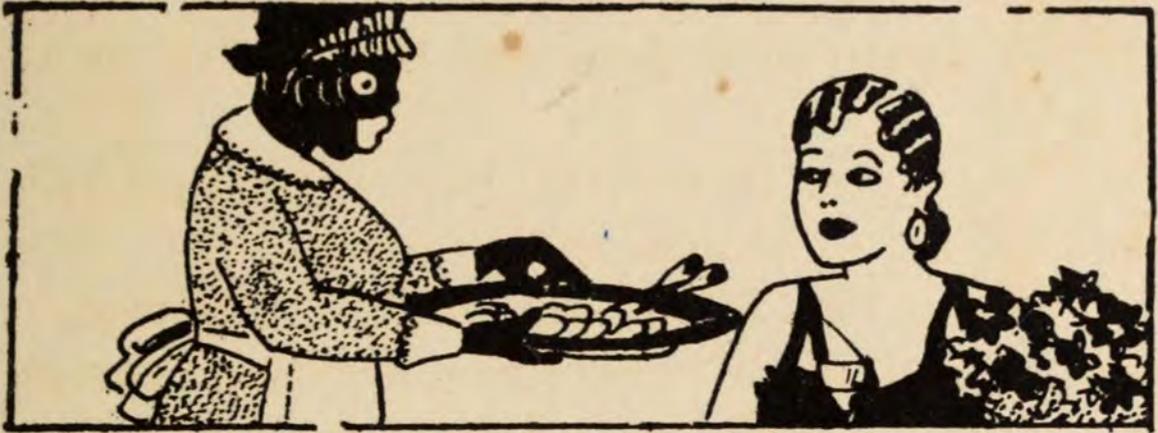
"Oh, no, Mr. Van," replied Ben earnestly. "That five dollars don't wasted. Dem Bajan folks gits fined five dollars and I don't git fined at-all, at-all!" And then he chuckled with evident relish. "Dem still so surprised dem cawn't believe it yet!"



PHRASEOLOGY FROM FRIJOLES

Mammy Ida was maid in a family where there were some rather obstreperous children. One afternoon, during the absence of their parents, they staged considerable of a riot.

"Tchk, tchk, tchk!" Mammy Ida muttered disapprovingly, "When de cyat's away de rats take possesshion!"



BOSOM OF THE FAMILY

ANNABELLE has been with the Thompsons ever since she came from Jamaica twenty years ago. Cheerful, black, efficient, and fiercely loyal, she has been on the firing line through all the ups and downs which a normal family falls heir to, in a period of two decades. Measles, mumps, weddings—nothing touching the Thompsons during all that long time has failed to find Annabelle right in the midst of it.

Her attitude toward the family is a distinctly proprietary one. They very definitely are her folks and she assumes certain liberties as her rightful due. They have long since given up any slight ideas they may once have had, about keeping Annabelle submerged. She is deferential, but not humble; would be shocked to death if told she must serve a meal in silence. She has always

chatted amiably as she waits on the table, and she always will. Because she is Annabelle.

“Now, Dickie, you jes’ eat them potatoes, now!” she will say, filling the glasses. “If’n you don’t, I goin’ give that big piece pie out there to Fido! Jes’ look how nice Marg’et has et all her dinner . . . even the spinach! I specks I goin’ give her the biggest piece pie I kin fine!” And since she has always been able to get more food down the children than either of their parents, they let her alone.

Annabelle is also on easy terms with the family’s friends, who accept her the same as do her employers; chat with her on terms of friendly familiarity. She is the one and only Annabelle, and they like her.

Knowing that strangers might misunderstand, however, her mistress has at times tried to break Annabelle of talking when guests are present; but she hasn’t had much luck. “Now, Miz Andrews, you better have another these biscuits. They mighty good!” she’ll say with such an ingratiating smile that the lady invariably succumbs to the temptation, even though she is on a strict diet, trying to reduce her waist line.

“I’ve really got to do something about Annabelle,” her mistress said in exasperation one evening, however, while she and her husband were

talking over a dinner party they had just given. "I think I could have wrung her neck tonight, even though the guests did think it highly amusing and didn't seem to mind."

"Oh, let Annabelle alone," her husband said, grinning. "She's a good old girl and they all understand her; get a kick out of her!"

His wife sighed in exasperated resignation. After all, there really is almost nothing one *can* do with Annabelle. That evening they had had turkey for dinner and the hostess had rung for some more white meat midway in the festivities.

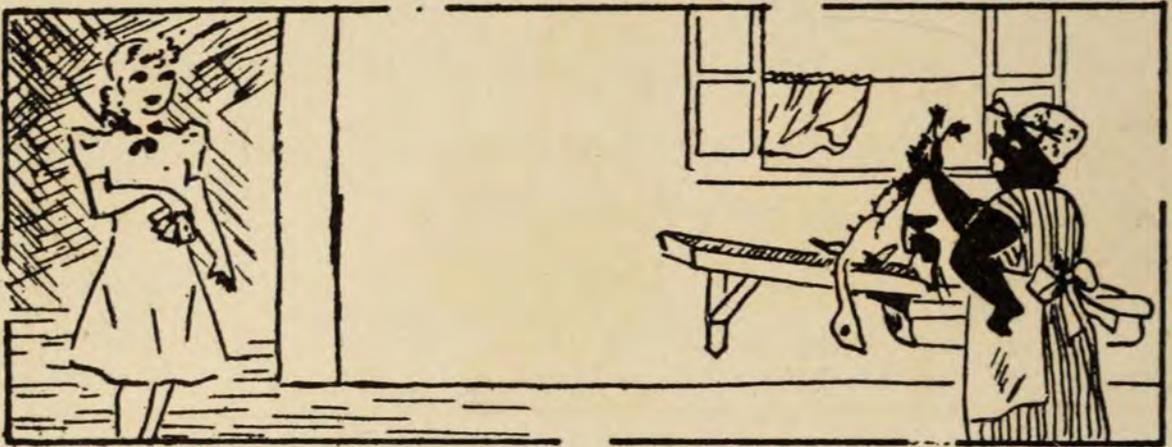
Beaming, Annabelle bore in a platter, beautifully sliced. Pausing by the guest lady, a pernickety tourist from Boston, she said, coaxingly, "Oh, come on, Miz Jordan, have another piece of nize bust!"



THE WISH FATHERING THE THOUGHT

Because the house had settled a trifle on its foundations, a casement window in the Allerton home kept swinging shut all the time. Marcellina got plenty exasperated, trying to keep it stationary.

"This window show a desire not to wish to remain open!" she said finally, throwing up her hands in disgust.



THE TOO-SLENDER SILHOUETTE

I BROUGHT home a chicken from the market one day. It wasn't a particularly impressive looking chicken, I knew, but I had bought it late in the morning, when the selection was limited. It was the best there was.

My cook was grimly disapproving of my choice. She considered I'd been pretty badly jipped on the bargain.

"There isn't anything *really* wrong with it, is there, Gladys?" I asked her, meekly defensive, as is the way of a mistress with a maid who is boss of the house.

"It a no-good chicken, Ma'am!" Gladys said severely as she held up the denuded bird for a scornful scrutiny. "It too meager. It so meager it be jus' a bite when it cook. No chicken any good when it too meager!" she ended chidingly and reprovngly. One does have to teach white ladies so many things before them intellectual about such-like importances of life!



SECURITY

Old Tobias furnishes my neighbor, Mrs. Mason, with fresh garden vegetables. He and his sister have a small plot of ground leased from a Spaniard for their truck patches; and even though the land-owner charges as high a rental as the traffic will bear, they manage to clear a little profit to pay them for their work.

One day Tobias arrived in a state of indignant dudgeon. He was so mad and upset that he fairly sizzled. Setting down his basket of greens, he told his lady all about it. With gestures and gesticulations.

“When I gwine away, yest’idy,” he raged, “dat Spanish mon he gwine a mi patch and help heself to mi prop’ty. He tek mi beans, mi cuCUMbers, and mi fines’ h’egg plahnt! And I gwine call de POLICE!”

Mrs. Mason expressed sympathy for his loss

and said she thought the Spanish mon had certainly done wrong.

“Yes, Mist-ress!” Tobias exploded emphatically. “Him do sorry bad, for true. When we pays de rent in cyash, den de land belongs to we. An’ de provisions on it should be secure!”



PLEDGE OF TROTH

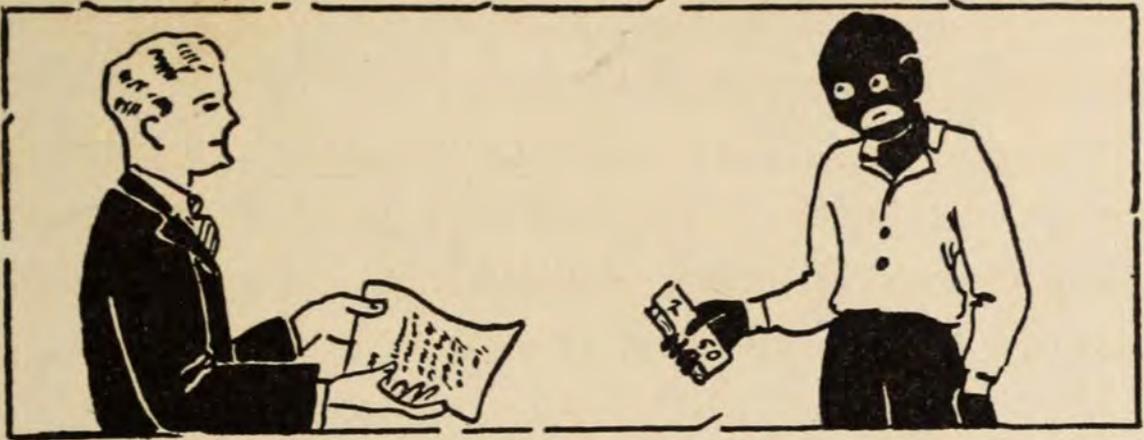
A dusky couple presented themselves before a Cristobal minister, saying they were desirous of becoming man and wife. Attending them were four children in stair-step gradations of age. Asked who they were, they were proudly proclaimed as the ripened fruit of the new union-to-be.

“Them is our engagement babies, Suh!” Ferguson said, beaming proudly.

THE ROAD OF NO RETURNING

A West Indian laborer, applying for a job, knew his house number to put on the file, but not the name of the street where he lived. He was sent home to find out.

“I lives on **ONE WAY STREET**, Sar!” he reported triumphantly and with satisfied smugness when he returned.



A MAIDEN YOUNG AND FAIR

ANY white boss of a colored work crew has to perform manifold duties not listed on the official outline of his activities. Banker, loan agency, religious and business advisor, arbitrator of family and neighborhood quarrels . . . all these, and many other responsibilities, he has to assume for the men under his care.

One of the most irritatingly amusing things he does is seeing that the colored boys under him contribute toward the support of their numerous extra-marital offspring. When Jake or Mose or Tom fails to turn in his obligatory payments on time, the Boss generally tries to settle the matter himself, rather than have the irate lady in the picture carry the case to "the Building." No use having a boy get in dutch if he can be brought to time without it.

Due to this paternalistic attitude on the part of

most white bosses, aggrieved ladies suffering from financial neglect on the part of gentlemen friends, who also happen to be the acknowledged fathers of one or more of their offspring, often write to the white boss to straighten out the forgetful one before she has the law on him.

One of these white chiefs has preserved for his memory archives, such a letter received a year or so ago from a highly indignant girl friend of a "boy" working in his department.

Respectful Sir: (the letter began)

In the large trubel of my hart I write to you. I am a fair young maden of twenty-one (21) summers what has suffered grate wrong from one Cyril Thelan works for you. I born fo him two (2) suns, aged ate and ten yrs. old. They are hisn and he don't help me no more since he took up with that Sophy Andrews lives in Chorillo. My honer was torn asunder and I need a comisary book for he hasn't give me one (1) fore one month. Make him come to time and the Lord Jesus help you forever.

Your obedient servant,

Ellspeth Graham.



BIBLICAL TRUISM

De rain him fall on de good and on de bad!



THE PUNGENT PUNCH

WHEN mentioning the more violent emotions, wherein grave bodily injury is superimposed upon some party of the second part by a said party of the first part, the West Indian has his own emphatically picturesque method of expressing it.

“I give him the blows!” is a favorite way of putting it.

“Careful, es . . . or I will bounce you!” needs no explanation to clarify its meaning.

In relating the gory details of a battle wherein the teller has won a victory of which he may well boast, however, he may expand his oratory in a big way; but at the end he is pretty likely to sum it all up in as pat a manner as you could wish, by stating simply, “I sho’ lick ’im down!”



FORBIDDEN JOYS

I seek salvation, Sar, but I don’t kotch de job!



LANGUAGE POTENCY

WHILE idiosyncrasies of diction among the older West Indian generation here differ as radically as do the various vernacular patterns peculiar to the speech of our South, Middle West, or "Down East" sections, there are a few expressions which are staple; a picturesque part of the vocabulary used by practically every West Indian whose manner of speaking had been formed before he left His Majesty's holding in the New World.

"Next" is an old stand-by; without which the Jamaican would be bereft indeed. "The nex' lady come to call this afternoon, Ma'am!" Or, "The nex' gentleman say he come back at four o'clock, Sir!"

The exact meaning of "next" is not especially clear, but certainly it performs a multiple service.

“Would you like a nex’ cup of cawfee, Sir?”
“The baiby done drink heself a nex’ glass of milk this afternoon, Mistress!” “Here is a nex’ orange, Ma’am, if’n you need one!”

A mistress who asks her kitchen helper to hand her another egg, will invariably be told, “The nex’ egg don’t there, Mistress. All finish!” And the housewife will know, if she has been on the Isthmus even a month, that a trip to the commy egg counter faces her in the immediate future.

Any lady who is engaged in the tedious process of assisting in boosting the census enrollment, is always, according to Jamaican parlance, “Making a baiby.” A sensible way of stating the situation, too; for it leaves no room whatsoever for misunderstanding.

“Finish” is another of the A B C’s of the West Indian vocabulary. “The coffee all finish, Ma’am!” Or, “We’ll have to use brown bread for dinner, Mistress; the white loaf finish!”

Everything gets finished. The ironing is finish, the cake is finish, the oranges are all finish, and the ham it finish too. It is a good sturdy word which renders heroic service.

There may be a few West Indians among us who pronounce the name “Smith” the way we do, but they are not many. “Simit,” is the accepted Jamaican version; and a good many of a Smith’s

white associates humorously call him by the same title—Mr. Simit. Some Smiths on the Isthmus are never called by any other name.

Maturity means ripeness, and the West Indian uses it to denote just that. A caller during one's absence will be described by the maid upon one's return, as a "ripe enough wo-man of considerable heft!"

A colored laborer, asked by his boss, "How old a fellow is this Hendricks that you say is a good carpenter?" will be told, "Him a ripe enough man, Boss!"

Describing the vicissitudes of age which creep upon one, a maid will tell her mistress, "Liza not so spry as she used to was, ma'am. She getting pretty ripe, now, you know!"

No list of colored localisms would be complete without "mash-up." It is spoken as one word, "mashup," and means all sorts of disturbances—mental, moral, and physical. Henrietta, the Thompson's maid, is all mashup because her man done took up with a no 'count Bajan 'oman. And your own Edith doesn't feel so spry for work this morning, because she took castor h'ile last night, and is all mashup!

A truck ran over a neighbor's cat and, logically enough, left it all mashup; Also a man whot

kotch malaria when him stay too long in de bush, will have to go hospital because him all mashup.

A cake which comes to no good end in the oven, is "Too bad, ma'am, it all mashup!" And a plate dropped on the floor during the ritual of dish washing, will probably call forth a burst of Jamaican consternation in "Oh mi Lord Jesus—it all mashup!"



THE NATIVE SON

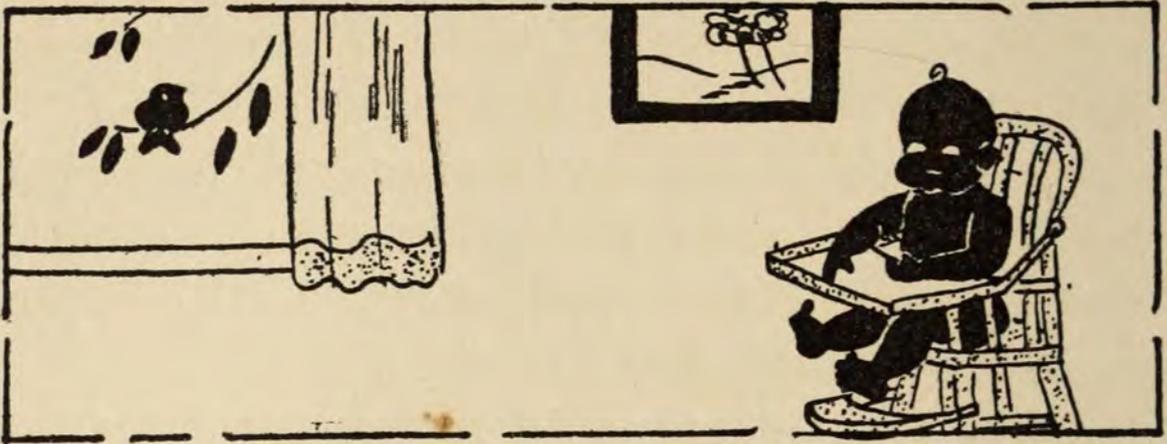
A Cristobal immigration official was checking the papers of a coast-wise steamer crew and was inclined to question the status of one small black laborer. He was not entirely convinced that the fellow was entitled to entry.

Finally turning to the colored clerk at his side, he said, "Johnson, who is this bird anyway? Do you know him?"

"Oh, yes, suh, Mr. Ingersol," the clerk assured him definitely. "He all right; he's a Colon-liver!"

ARCHITECTURAL ENGINEERING

"I build you a two-pants suit for twenty dollar," said the smiling tailor to an inquiry by a gentleman in the Accounting Department. "Howsomever, if you wants it a one-pants suit, I build she for fifteen dollar!"



SHOULD AULD ACQUAINTANCE

ISULLA one day, speaking with an admixture of pride and uncertainty in her voice, told her mistress that she couldn't work much longer because, you see, she was makin' a baiby. She would have to lay off for three or four months; but couldn't she have her job back after the interesting event had taken place?

Her mistress, a bit chagrined, said she would have to see what could be done. Isulla was a good maid and she would like to have her back, of course, but it wasn't easy to hire the right kind of girl for just four months. Maybe she could get one with the understanding that the position was only temporary, though. Perhaps some girl whose employers were on vacation. Anyway, she would see what could be done.

As an afterthought she added, "You aren't married to that man, are you?"

"Oh, no, Mistress!" Isulla said emphatically and a little shocked. "I should say not!"

"Well . . . ! But aren't you going to marry him, now that you are having a baby and all that?" was the rather scandalized query. Not too scandalized, of course, knowing her girl.

Isulla wanted her lady to get the situation straight, and with no misunderstandings.

"Oh, no, Ma'am!" she said earnestly. "You see, we're jus' friends. I don't know him nearly well enough for matrimony!"



THE PAYING TELLER

Colored gentleman walking importantly to the window of the Chase Bank in Cristobal, "Is dis bank in function? If so, I is wishful to make a deposition!"

THE RIDDLE OF THE H'AITCH

The picturesque potency of the "haitch" is expressed nowhere more clearly and succinctly than in a report which Lizzie gave her mistress one day regarding a common Isthmian tragedy.

"There is h'ants in the h'ice box, Ma'am," she said worriedly. "We needs some more h'ile to set the legs h'in!"



PETALS ON THE TIDE

ONE of the chief causes of misunderstanding between white employers and their colored helpers here, is, ironically enough, the earnest desire of the latter to please the former! They try so zealously to do exactly what they are told, that they frequently over-do it; fall backward in their intent eagerness to stand erect, as it were.

Our language is, really, a peculiar one to those not familiar with it from birth; full of hidden shadings of meaning; and the West Indian is painfully literal in his interpretation of directions. That usually causes the difficulties and misunderstandings which arise.

In this connection I am thinking of a wryly laughable incident which arose because a servant followed directions to the letter. Laughable, that is, from the viewpoint of an onlooker. The victim

herself is able to smile now, telling about it. At the time, however . . . well, hardly!

Mrs. Brown ordered some flowers one morning for a dinner party she was giving that evening. She was to be gone for the day, but said, as she was leaving, "Mabel, a greenhouse order will be here this morning. When it comes, put the flowers in water to keep them fresh, please."

She departed for the day, arriving home in the late afternoon. Looking for the roses she had ordered, she found them in a big pan; the rose buds, blossom-end down, in a pan of water, the stems in the air! They had been that way for six hours.

Lifting one of the water-logged posies which were as limp and dead as any blossom would be after six hours with stems in the heat, she took Mabel vehemently to task for doing such a thing.

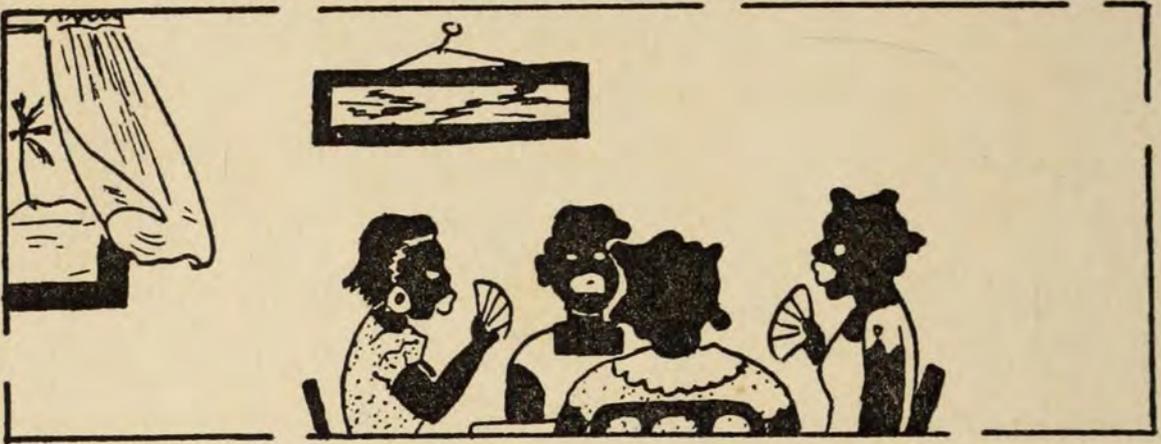
"But, Mist-ress," Mabel expostulated reasonably, "You tell me to put the blossoms in water. You doan say me to put the stems in water . . . so I din't!"

Mabel had her there. She hadn't!



HENRY DISCUSSING A PRIZE FIGHT

I fawncy de sport, Mon, but me don't qualify for de blows!



EQUIVALENTS

SOME of our provincialized expressions make little sense to a person not thoroughly acquainted with Yankee diction. It is because we use so many apparently meaningless phrases which add spice and flavor to conversation, however, that we can sympathize with, and appreciate, some of the West Indian's similar expressions.

Occasionally in a bridge game, for instance, one player who has passed through two or three rounds of bidding, suddenly comes out with a three-spade declaration. In such a situation, the to-be-expected comment by at least two people at the table, will be, "Well . . . ! Here's another country heard from!"

The West Indian under like circumstances, gets the same meaning across by saying, "Whew! Blue fish come out of rock!"



SOCIAL SECURITY

SOME of us are inclined to smile a little patronizingly at the frequent lodge processions marching along the colored sections of Central Avenue; in celebration of this or that important day in the calendar of the marching organization. We look upon them, generally, as merely a desire to dress up and strut before an admiringly envious world of onlookers. My own viewpoint was changed radically a few years ago by an old colored maid who put me right on the matter.

My Daisy, kinky black and unlettered as she was, possessed a rigid sense of the square course to follow in ordinary human relationships; and she lived up to it. Her code of respectability differed slightly from that of her white associates, but she lived up to hers quite as rigidly as we adhere to ours. She could do no less and preserve a self esteem which meant a great deal to her. Her

observations on life, people, and human affairs in general, which she sometimes propounded while dusting and straightening, were at times startlingly sound and logical.

She had asked to get off early one afternoon to attend what was her chief social delight . . . a very fine funeral being conducted by her "society."

Knowing the pitifully small wages for which the colored people work, I had often wondered about these elaborate funeral processions which are forever wending their way through the streets of Panama. I asked her to tell me how they managed to do it; so, leaning on her mop, with her kind black face shining, she told me all about it.

"You see, Miss," she began, "we all belongs to a society or lodge of some kind. Colored peoples must do it. Them don't get much money and it very hard to save; but by belonging to a society, we know we be looked after when we sick, and have a funeral when we die.

"We pay seventy-five cents or a dollar a month to the society and if we get sick, we get three dollars a week to live on till we can go back to work again. When we die, we know we be buried nice. But that isn't all. When even a little baby dies in Panama, there must be papers fixed up and it

means all day walk up and down, walk up and down—" Her way of defining the red tape regulations which accompany all birth or death happenings, no matter where one may live.

"The society," she went on with her tale, "has officers to take care of all that for us. They have understandings with the government so they fix it up very easy and the family don't have to bother."

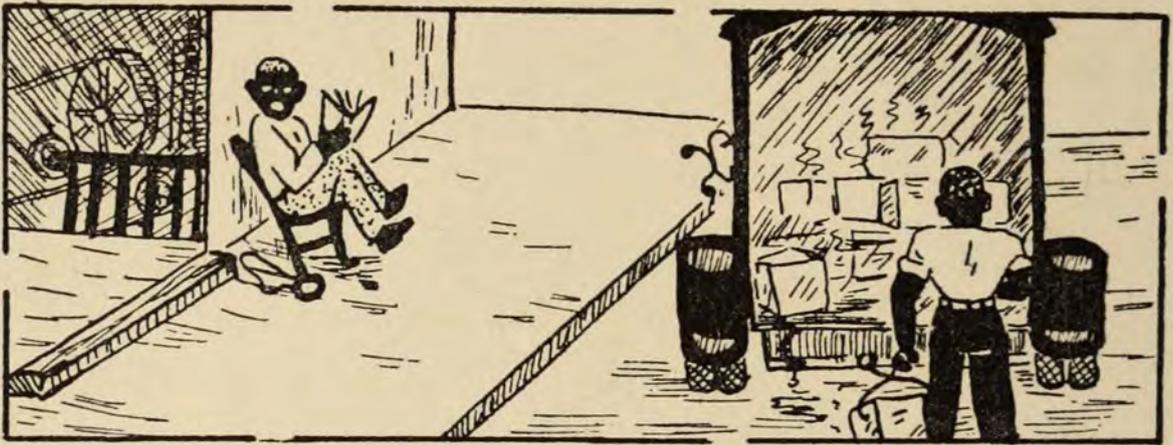
I remarked that it all seemed to be a very sensible arrangement, and she agreed emphatically.

"It is the only thing for colored people, Miss," she said. "By each one paying a little bit every month, we all help one another out, and when we old and can't work, we know we don't starve. We can't save money to take care us when we old, but we joins a society and that is just as good!" Benevolent societies, insurance against an old age of poverty and want. Have we anything in the line of social security that is any better?



REFERENCES GIVEN

Johnson, asked by his boss if he were experienced enough chauffeur to drive the new car which the office had just obtained, replied, "Adequately so, Sar; but not too prominent!"



PARADISE LOST

ALL fallen kings are pathetic. A tumble of any sort hurts, and it stands to reason that the greater the distance one is catapulted, the more severe the jolt when he lands. I have often ached with sympathy for Napoleon on his lonely isle; not because of the barren island prison itself, but because of the contrast which must have filled his soul with the wormwood of despair.

I have a friend here who harbors the same wistful longing for a grander pattern of life that has long since passed him by; a friend who, like Napoleon, must now depend upon memories of his roseate past to furnish him with all the joy he ever hopes to have.

This friend is an old colored watchman to whom his come-down from former grandeur is quite as sharply bitter as were the changed circumstances of the too-ambitious "Little Emperor."

Ephriam once held what he considers the deluxe, cream de la cream job of all jobs on the Isthmus. It is one which he has no hopes of regaining, ever; and therefore, like an exile from the Promised Land, he looks forever backward; luxuriating in memories of the glory that once was his, but is no more. Ephriam, in short, was an ice man. An ice man who lost the job.

“My, my, my!” he exclaims, when, like the kindred souls we are, we discuss the affairs of the troubled world in which we both live. “That was one fine job, Miss; a fine job! In fact, it was the bes’ job I ever had. I sure did like that job!”

I delicately drew out the poetry in his soul by inquiring as to the lovelier features about delivering ice.

“Sho, but it was nice!” he breathed in ecstatic remembrance, as he scratched his wooly pate. “Riding on the back of that big ole truck; feeling the good cole air from the inside, and the warm sun on our backs! And they’d always be pieces of ice we could put in our mouths to make us feel cool and comfort-able. Ummmmmmmm! That was sure one swell job!”

Further drawing-out tactics revealed other alluring perquisites which I had not thought of as being a lovely part of any job.

“We got to see into so many houses, too,” he

went on, smiling wistfully to himself. "Such nice houses, some of them! Such fine things as they had in them, that we could walk kinda slow and look at. And the good things cooking on the stoves. . . . It was so nice to smell 'em! And then, sometimes, an extry kind lady would give us a piece of cake or a cup of cawfee, or maybe a san'-wich. UmmmmMMM! That was a fine job, sure!"

Inquiries elicited the information that Ephriam had been snatched from this Utopian occupation by the colored strike that took place many years ago. Older residents all remember it.

"A speaker feller tole us we mus' all say we don't work no more, less'n we gits wages jus' like white folks," he said, sorrowfully shaking his head. "I was gittin' along all right, but the boys all say I mus' strike. So I stroke; and when I fin'lly went back to my job, 'nother feller had it and I never been able to git it back. An' it was the bes' job I ever had in this world!"

Napoleon agonizing over a broken dream of lost empire; recalling the time when, looking from the dizzy heights of a world domain, he had surveyed a horizon wherein he reigned powerful and absolute looking ever backward with a longing compounded of pure misery. Ephriam gazing longingly and regretfully into a glorious past

where he had held down the coveted status of an ice man there is little difference in the wistful emotions choking the heart of each!



IRON BARS DO NOT A PRISON MAKE

A switch near the roundhouse was being repaired. The man in charge told one of his helpers to go to the tool shed and get the big monkey wrench there.

Gillian started off at a trot. Knowing his proclivities at misunderstanding instructions, however, his boss called him back.

"Gil, do you know for sure what you are to get this time?" he wanted to know.

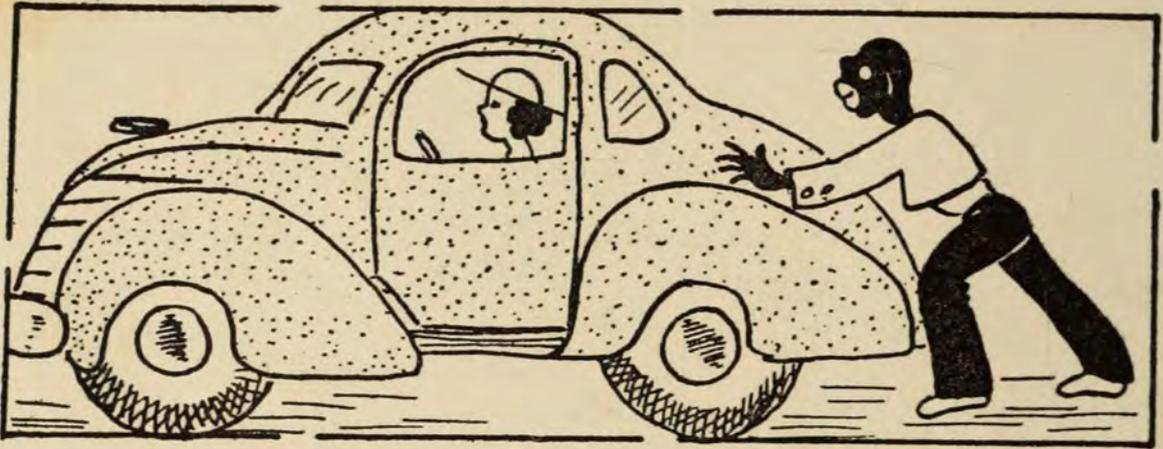
"Oh, yes Sar, Boss, I knows!" Gillian was definite on that point.

"Well, tell me what you are going to ask for, when you get there," the foreman insisted. (Some white men just never leave anything to chance!)

Gillian's smile was all self-assurance, however. "I goin ask they for de big claw bar!" he answered triumphantly.

LA BOCA PHILOSOPHY

A mon is a mon; a woman a woman; a cheild a cheild; a baiby a baiby. If dem don't dat, what dem is?



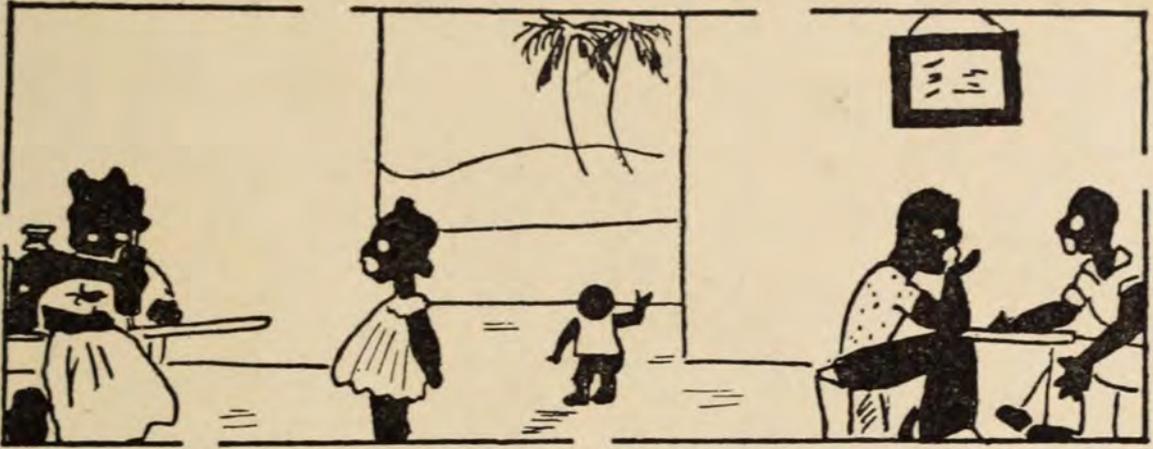
S. O. S.

A FRIEND was starting home from a Golf Club party one day when her car took a stubborn notion and refused to start. After using the starter vainly for a while, she got out and gave the chassis an experimental shake, to see how solidly it was rooted in its tracks. Just then one of the waiters, seeing her from the Clubhouse, came hurriedly down the steps.

“I noted your distress from afar, Ma’am,” he said sympathetically, “so I hastened to bring you succor. I was afraid you would expire from exasperation!”

She didn’t quite expire, however; for between the two of them, they got the balky car persuaded, finally, and she rolled on down the hill—and home.





SOCIAL SNOBBERY

THERE exists a well known and not too deeply veiled antagonism between the Barbadians and the Jamaicans on the Isthmus. The antipathy is racial rather than personal; somewhat like the disdain existing between two dowagers heading separate and rival social sets. They may buddy up together as individuals in isolated cases, but on the whole, they don't like one another too well.

There are many ways in which members of the two factions manifest their lack of appreciation and respect for one another. A Jamaican can express a world of scornful deprecation merely by the way he says, "That Bajan mon!" And the Barbadians are no less adept at withering the Jamaicans with a word.

This jeering attitude is expressed rather plainly in a ditty which the Jamaicans are very fond of repeating:

Nine Barbadians live in one room,
Not enough money for to buy a broom;
What the Bajan peoples them call a spree,
Is one pint of sody, divided by t'ree!



MILLS THAT GRIND SLOWLY

Mr. Jorgens showed her maid how to assemble the meat grinder to make hash from Sunday's roast. The hash was successful, but after dinner when the dishes were being done in the kitchen, Helen appeared at the door in a slightly perturbed state.

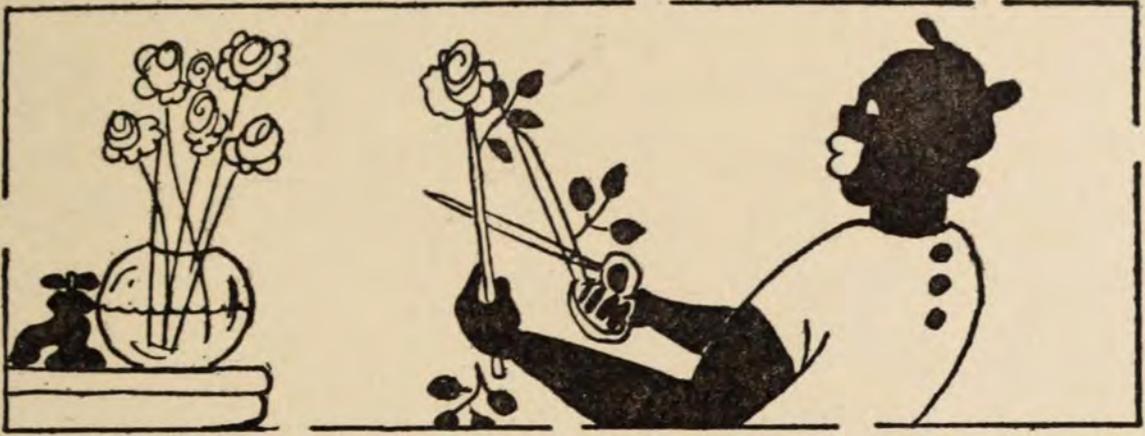
"Ma'am," she said breathlessly, "I cawn't break de beef mill. You must come and instruct me in the method!"

GRAIN FROM THE CHAFF

Mrs. Madison dumped a pile of commissary purchases onto the kitchen table.

"Wash that celery and cut off the tops before you serve it, Celeste," she said, departing for the afternoon.

When she came in that evening with the guests she had met at the boat, the celery tops were waving jauntily from a vase in the center of the table. The stalks were already on their way to the incinerator in a garbage truck.



THE MAIN STEM

MRS. EDERLY had a new maid who arrived on the job as a bit of auxiliary assistance in helping with a cocktail party she was giving one afternoon.

The regular maid and a friend or so had been hustling around all afternoon, helping her do the million and one things which go with cocktail party giving. Any woman will understand.

The new maid was awkward, but willing, and did each task assigned to her, painstakingly and with careful attention to detail. She listened intently to every direction given, and one could almost hear her repeating it over and over to herself to make sure she got it just right. Because white folks **DO** have queer ways of saying things, you know.

Late in the afternoon, when things were hum-

ming along at a brisk pace, Jemima asked what she should do next. Mrs. Ederly was busy with the canapes, but called over her shoulder, "Well, I guess you had better begin to fix the flowers. They are in the bathtub, Jemima. You may trim the leaves off them and arrange them in those vases I have set there on the bathroom shelves. Be sure and put some ferns and greenery in each vase!"

Jemima closed the bathroom door and fell to.

A half hour later her mistress finished whatever it was she was doing, and opened the bathroom door to see how Jemima was getting along with the flowers. Opened the door—and gave a shriek that carried for four blocks, flat.

Jemima had followed directions to the dot. They had told her to take the leaves off the roses and put them in the vases. And she did. She had done the job so painstakingly that there wasn't even a suggestion of a leaf left on a single rose stem. She had them skinned as clean as telephone poles.

We had best draw a merciful curtain over the scene that followed; although passers-by probably heard, above a confused hysterical medley of feminine shrieks, wails and moans, Jemima's injured voice stubbornly reiterating, "But you tole

me, Ma'am, to take the leaves off'n the roses, and I do so. I do jus' whut you tole me to!"

There was really no room for argument. She had.



EVERYTHING AT STEAK

The words "marshmallows" and "mushrooms" don't sound at all alike to a person familiar with our language. To one unaccustomed to all its finer shadings, however . . .!

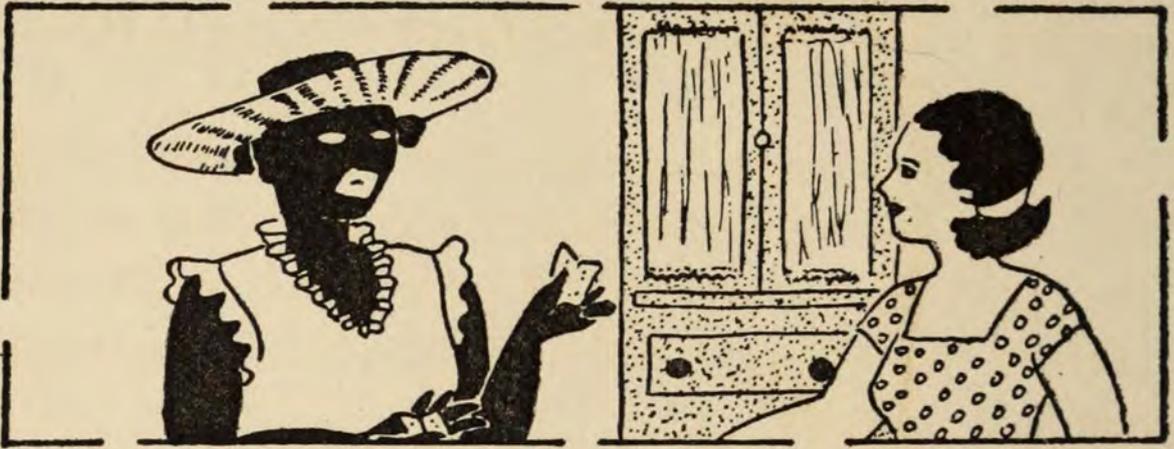
"I'd like the steak fixed with mushrooms this evening, Tillie," said Mrs. Hanson. "Do you know how?"

"Oh, yes'm!" Tillie assured her confidently.

That evening the steak was brought proudly to the table, smoking under a delicious layer of golden brown marshmallows with which it had been generously piled before being put into the oven!

HEROD'S VINDICATION

Clementina, unburdening her woes to her mistress, said, "I hopes I never make another boy cheild, Ma'am! They is too rude and troublesome. They jus' get de room in such a state you won't believe. And they all-time quarrel and make rowdy, till everytime I hears de van (police car), my heart she leap wid fright!"



OUR METALLIC AGE

MARTHA'S mistress had been trying to find some hinges for a china closet door which needed repairing. She had looked in the commissary, but they had none there. A trip to the Storehouse netted, also, a loss. They had hinges, but not quite what she wanted.

Martha offered to see if she could find them down town, and was accordingly commissioned to do so. The next day, sure enough, she came triumphantly in, carrying exactly the hinges her lady had had in mind but couldn't find.

"Where on earth did you find them, Martha?" she was asked.

"At the h'iron monger's, ma'am!" Martha replied, beaming.

"At the—what?" was the mystified reply.

"At the h'iron monger's. You know, ma'am,

a store where them carries many h'objects made of h'iron."

Since a look of complete befuddlement still creased her lady's face, she made a mighty effort to clarify the situation. "I believe it is what you calls it, the 'ardware store, ma'am," she explained condescendingly.



THE HARASSMENTS OF LIFE

"I think we better close that window, Mum," said Anastasia, coming hastily in from the kitchen. "The wind harasses the flowers and the candles on the table too auspiciously!"

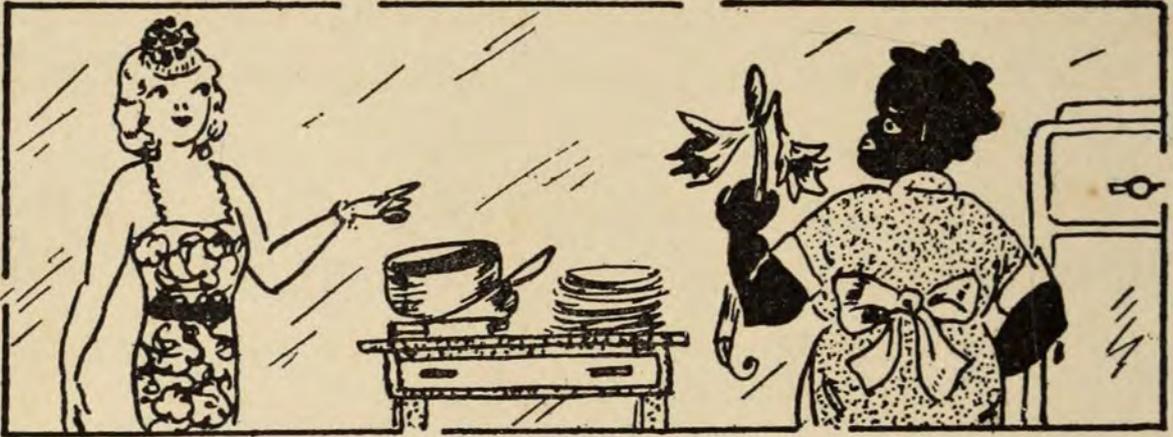
NEED OF A MURAD TO LIGHT

When white people get themselves into embarrassing predicaments, as we all do at times, we comment on the matter in telling about it, by saying, "Was my face red!"

Melissy, my neighbor's maid, expresses the same emotion by saying, "Can you imagine my trail!"

BLASTS THAT BLOW

Dekes, explaining an eye that was swollen almost shut: "I chuck him one, mon; but him t'row him cuff and blawst me in the h'eye!"



THE SPICE OF LIFE

IT is an undying testimonial to the tolerant forbearance of the colored people who play such an important rôle in our everyday lives, that they put up with us as good naturedly as they do. Not accustomed to the pattern of either our speech or our way of living, they are no doubt often completely astounded and flabbergasted by some of the directions they receive.

Even though some of the things they are asked to do, sound utterly ridiculous, they try cheerfully to obey the request punctiliously; hoping by strict adherence to the letter of the command, to fulfill expectations. The amusing and exasperating blunders they make at times in carrying out such directions, are generally as much our fault as theirs—if, indeed, not more so.

In connection with the foregoing premise, I am thinking of Tessie, a maid not long in this

country, and by no means familiar with the queer and unintelligible jargon spoken by the white people about her.

Tessie wanted desperately to make good in the new world to which she had come, and strove painstakingly to follow to the letter, whatever she was told to do. Then she wouldn't get into trouble. It was plainly evident that frequently she was completely at sea about what was expected of her, however—a blind man striking off in the dark, being no more at a loss than Tessie about some of the jobs with which she was faced. However, like the heroes at Balaklava, hers not to reason why; hers but to do or die—!

One evening her mistress was giving a buffet dinner and had gotten some pickalilli at the commy as a relish for the meat dish she was serving. Glancing over the table just before her guests arrived, she noticed that the relish was missing.

“Don't forget the pickalilli!” she called over her shoulder as she went to answer the door bell. She noticed that Tessie looked rather blank, but only said, “Yes'm!” as she generally did about things she was told to do.

After the guests were seated on the porch, the hostess stepped into the kitchen to give a few last-minute directions—and saw Tessie just coming

in through the back door with one of those red lilies so common here at certain seasons, in her hand.

“What on earth is that for?” the lady asked in surprise.

“I dunno, Mistress,” Tessie said with a hint of grim resignation in her manner. “You jes’ say me to go pick a lily—and here ’tis!”



THE MANLY APPROACH

Leelia came back to her job as cook after being granted a couple of months’ maternity leave by her employers. She had presented the world with another son during her absence.

“Did you have any special difficulty when your baby was born?” her mistress asked interestedly when Leelia was telling her about the important event.

“No, Mum,” Leelia said proudly. “He walk out like a man!”

THE POTENT BREW

We who live here, smile a bit when a guest from the States looks startled at a quite common query of our West Indian maids, “Do you want I should t’row the tea, now, Ma’am?”



RETURN ADDRESS MISSING

THE Hendersons were possessed of a maid, Adeline, who was long on the virtue of willingness, but rather sparsely equipped with mental ability. She would do what she was told to, providing an understanding of what was wanted could be gotten through her, so to speak, opaque understanding. Many times the Hendersons decided in exasperation that she would have to go; but she was so patient and good with the children that they would sigh resignedly and decide to grin and bear it a while longer.

Early in her career as maid in their home, the Hendersons had taught Adeline to open their post office box so she could bring the mail with her as she passed the Ancon Post Office of a morning. The combination was a very simple one, and Adeline had managed to master it after a few trials; brought the mail with her each morning when she came to work.

One day Mr. Henderson, who was at home for the afternoon, decided to do some work on his car. Knowing a certain piece of mail which he was anxious to get, would be on the noon train from Cristobal, he called from the garage that afternoon, "Adeline, I wish you would go to the Post Office, please!"

Without comment, Adeline put on her shoes and hat, and trudged stolidly away.

When an hour had passed and she had not returned, they began to wonder what could be keeping her. At the end of two hours, his wife suggested that Mr. Henderson had better go see what had happened to her. Maybe she had been hurt—or something.

Climbing out from under the car and wiping his hands on a piece of waste, the head of the family roared away in his partially dismantled chariot. Driving up to the Ancon Post Office, he found Adeline leaning patiently against the railing on the Silver Side.

A short but pungent session of remonstrances and explanations followed, which left the pater familia perspiring freely and muttering things under his breath. He had told her to go to the Post Office—yes. But he hadn't told her to come back!



PINCH HITTERS

OF the numerous intriguing idiomatic expressions which definitely trade-mark the West Indian in our midst, it is doubtful if any is more commonly used than the all-encompassing "don't," or its even more comprehensive "don't got." Together they serve an infinity of uses; pinch-hitting for "isn't," "hasn't," "doesn't," and a half dozen other expressions.

The meaning which a Jamaican laborer can express by the use of those little words, leaves the white beholder positively weak with envy and admiration. A few terse examples of its versatility. . . .

Him don't get fever.

She don't so cranky this week as las'!

This h'apple don't good, Mistress!

Him don't prosperous in his new business.

Her don't so pretty like she sister is.

The weather don't so pleasant, today, Bawss.

The commy don't open as yet, Ma'am.

Him hands and face don't clean, Mammy; make
he wash heself!

Him don't got the chills again.

Your lady don't so particular as my lady is!

The ice man don't here as yet, Ma'am!

I don't so tired today as yesterday.

This table cloth don't clean enough to use for the
party, Ma'am!

The h'iron don't hot as yet, Mistress!

The cake don't done yet.

She buy a hat, but it don't pretty!



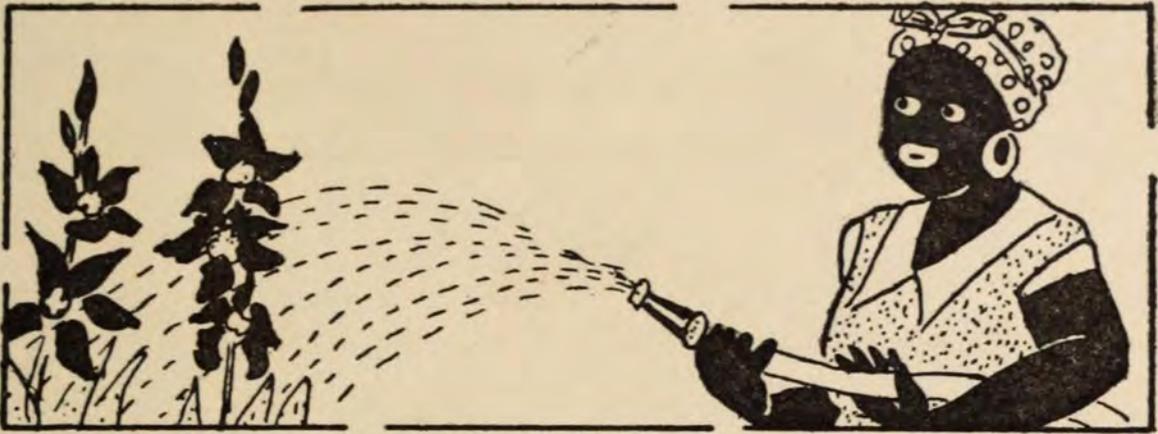
PARAISO TRUISM

We sometimes speak of a man who is important in his own small community, but who doesn't count for much otherwise, as a "big toad in a small puddle."

In Paraiso, the same idea is put across beautifully by saying, "In a blind man's country, de one-eyed man, he boss!"

THE LAST STRAW

A long-suffering martyr, fed up with the joking antics of a companion, "Don't make play, Mon; you fret I!"



ENGLISH AS SHE IS SPOKEN

DINAH works for Señora Wilkinson. She is as definite in her personality as any lady you have ever met; and it is doubtful if anyone of your acquaintance has a more intriguing manner of speaking.

To the end of her days Dinah will speak of her master's "tooth broom"; and her lady's foundation garment, as a "waist leggin'."

"Do you want I should wash yo' waist leggin' today, Mistress?" she asks as she gathers up the clothes and starts for her tubs.

As Sunday approaches, Dinah always has a "rake"; which, interpreted, means a lottery hunch.

When describing a friend who is doing well, from the standpoint of business or health, Dinah says, "Him walk good, these days!"

To callers who arrive before her mistress is dressed to receive them, she explains smilingly, "My lady prettying herself; but soon come!"



THE UPWARD CLIMB

"Now you jes' be calm and make a success of yo'self!" is Emmalina's way of soothing the emotional outbreaks of the juvenile members in the Jason family.

THE THINNING LINE

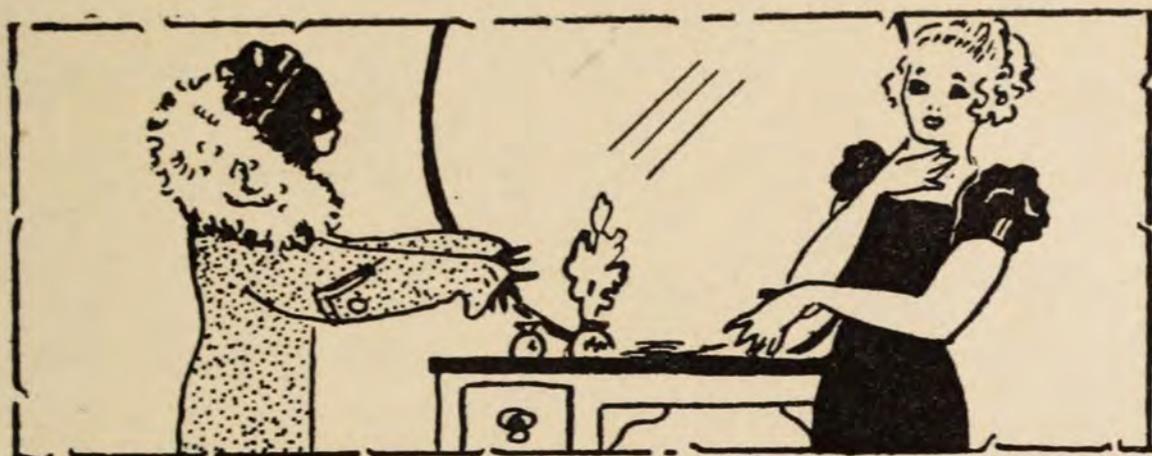
"Miss, this turkey is conspicuously meager in the bust!" said Dorlinda reprovngly to Mrs. Stoneman, who had brought it home from the commissary.

NERVE CENTERS

"Madam," said the new Stephanie, just appeared at the Hobsons for work. "If'n it be jes' the same to you, I prefers tea for breakfus'. Cawfee does lash mi nerves!"

BEAUTY REST

Della, arriving late for work one morning, said apologetically, "Mist-ress, I sorry I behine time, but I was a-gettin' mi sweet sleep and didn't wake h'up!"



OUT WHERE THE TALL SLEEVES GROW

MRS. STEVENS gave her maid a coat for which she no longer had any use. It was a good coat, scarcely worn, and as the maid and she were approximately the same size, she considered it would be a really useful gift.

Since Mrs. Stevens had arms a bit longer than those of the average figure, the sleeves were the one thing about the coat which didn't fit perfectly. That was a small matter, however, to Thelma, who was delighted with the gift.

"Mistress, that a beauteous coat!" she said with shining enthusiasm. "It fit lovely . . . jus' soh! One t'ing, only; de sleeves is too tall; but dem can fix. When dem can sew-up, Lord Jesus, how fine I can look!"



PATTERN FOR A MAID

WILMA is a cheerful, buxom maid in the home of a friend. She has been there for years, and pretty much takes charge of the ménage. Black, energetic, and smiling, she is one of the most interesting characters I know.

Wilma has her own very original and emphatic way of talking; has never bothered much trying to learn the crazy lingo spoken by white folks, because her own language suits her so much better. She has the argument strongly on her side, too, because there is no denying that her speech pattern has it all over ours when it comes to forceful, picturesque expression.

“Make I to fetch some bananas from the market this morning, Ma’am?” she will ask as she prepares for her buying expedition. “And meby-so I buy some shrimps if dem can cheap. If no, I don’t!”

One day her mistress heard her having a row with a neighboring maid. The other girl, it appeared, had been talking about her, and Wilma was giving her definitely to understand that a repetition of the offense would bring dire consequences down upon the head of the luckless offender. She wouldn't be talked about, so there!

"Woman, doan you put yo' mouth on me again," she said ominously. "For iff'n you does, I goin' chop you down; make you bawl like cow. No Bajan woman for dare put her mouth on me!"



APPLICATION DENIED

The milk man was discussing the attempt of the ice man to commit suicide; an attempt which had failed dismally.

"He too wicked to go to glory, Ma'am," he said, dolefully shaking his head. "He fling heself into de lake, but de Lord don't wish he dead as yet, so he jus' damage he haid!"

THE MISSING LINK

Mattie, asked to help find one of the master's cuff links which had been misplaced, replied, "Ma'am, I search h'all h'about, but I cawn't find she!"



ROSES BY OTHER NAMES

NICK, a Zone restaurant cook for many years, always refers to kitchen bouquet as “chicken bouquet.” Casseroles are “castorias.”

“A little chicken bouquet make gravy more tasty-fied,” he assures any interested inquirer.

“Today I fix the baked beans in the little castorias,” he opines as he prepares the little individual containers for the evening rush.

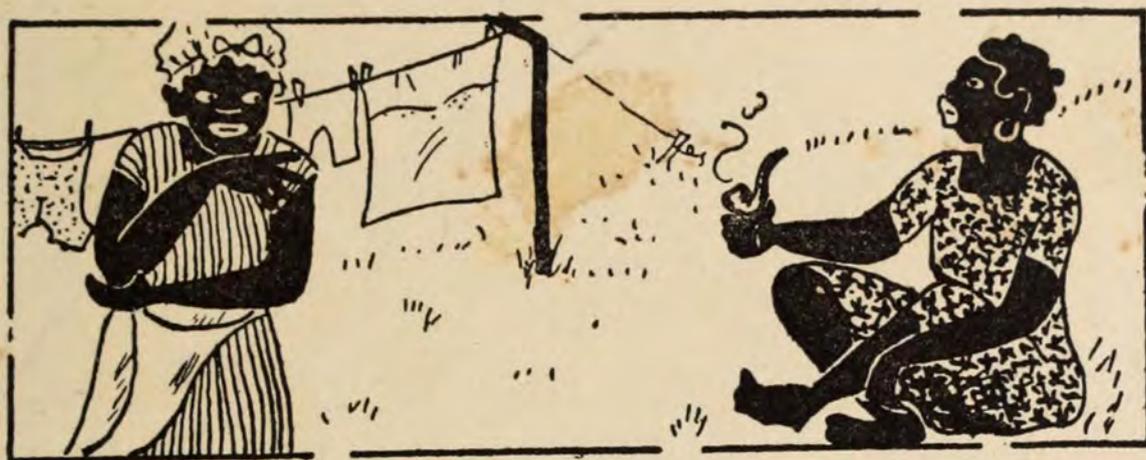


THE AIM TO PLEASE

“Must I ’trow the water on the table, now?” asks the March family’s Drusilla when it is time to fill the drinking glasses for dinner.

LETTERS FROM HOME

I send me money home and dey send to say dat da don’t get a line from I!



UNPOLISHED STONES

ZINNIA is not long from Jamaica, and to the uninitiate, she seems to be talking a foreign language. She speaks with a strong cockney accent; “h’s” dropped from their accustomed locations; “h’s” hitched onto words where no “h” belongs; final “g’s” erratically used—if not missing altogether. This combination, stirred all together and flavored with her own personal and original figures of speech, adds up to one of the most interesting linguistic exhibits which ever tickled the ear of civilized man.

“You want a h’egg for breakfus, Sur?” she asks as she gets ready to take charge of her kitchen domain for the day.

Zinnia is always “just fresh out of” anything which has been used up. “We’re just fresh out of bread, mum. Make I to get some this morning,

no?" she will ask, peering at the empty bread box. She is also fresh out of sugar, fresh out of spinach, or fresh out of soap for to wash de clo'es!

Coming in one morning, beaming in pleased remembrance, she confided to her mistress that "Las' night I went for joy ridin' in cyah. 'Twas a fyne joy ridin', for true, ma'am!"

Where we would remark, "You don't say!" when someone has told us a startling piece of news, Zinnia says, "Come nuh! Yo' doan mean h'it!"

Telling, one day, about a low-down, no account Bajan mon what live nex' door her, down in Chorille, she enumerated all the various evil shortcomings with which he was afflicted, and added as the crowning sin which he had committed, the fact that he had "done tief his own fathah's chicken and sell h'it—buy rum!"

She always speaks of a lady widowed by death, as "the remains" of the gentleman figuring as chief character in the funerals she loves so to attend. "Such a fyne cof-fin," she clucks admiringly, "a black one, an' Mose in he white suit inside it—migawd but he look a swell corpse! He remains wear w'ite dress and w'ite shoes. Look so fyne!" And she sighs enviously, but with the correct admixture of dolor appropriate to the circumstances.

Referring to the asbestos pad used under her lady's tablecloth to keep hot dishes from marring the varnish on the table, Zinnia speaks of it as "the w'ite board, ma'am, whut keep the hot from hottin' the table!"



EMOTION'S SAFETY VALVE

Old Samantha, cook for the past eighteen years in a Cristobal home, was walking down the street in front of a friend. She was carrying a huge bundle on her head and following the well-known Jamaican custom of talking to herself.

With first one arm and then another, flailing for emphasis, she was giving vent to emotions which must of necessity be suppressed under the life regime she follows:

"She say you is fire!"—a large gesture with the hand on the right.

"I say I don't give a *dom!*"—an even larger gesture with the hand on the left, as she swung belligerently around a corner.

This was all pure "supposing," however, because Samantha has been in the same home for eighteen years and, barring floods, fires and earthquake shocks which alone could dislodge her, she will be there for eighteen more.



THE LOCAL BUNION DERBY

ONE day a lady who lives on Colon Beach, glanced out of her front door and saw the maid who worked for a friend, limping slowly past the house; walking with evident difficulty.

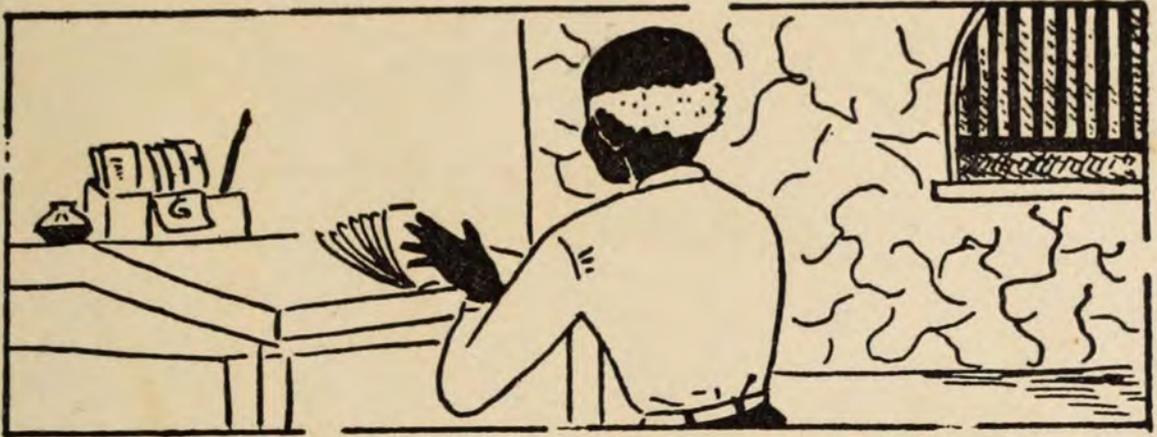
“What is the matter, Lucretia?” she called. “Have you hurt yourself?”

“No’m, not particklarly,” replied Lucretia as she stopped and lifted one foot from the pavement with a slight wince. “It’s jes’ dat mah shoes is a-boxin’ my corns!”



THE ALL-AROUND MAN

Gardener applying for a job, “Ma’am, I does work for all de ladies in h’Ancon and h’Amador; backwards and forwards and h’all h’about, Ma’am!”



BANKS AND TURNS

THE intricacies of banking will forever and aye be a closed book of mystery to simple souls who have been accustomed to hiding what few meager coins they accumulate, in spare sugar bowls and other secretive places about the house. It is a long time, therefore, before a Bush man transplanted to an urban setting, gets so he has complete faith and trust in a bank.

Shortly after Tolliver arrived from Barbados, he got a job with the Canal Commission, and some of his associates persuaded him to start a savings account. It was explained over and over to him that he could hand his money to the bank-folks and they would keep it safe for him. When he wanted it, they would return it intact and charge him nothing for the favor.

It sounded pretty good to Tolliver, who had

seen so many of his friends lose money through "tiefing" neighbors, so he deposited three dollars a month—although he never did feel exactly secure in his innermost soul about the transaction. It all sounded so mysterious and far-fetched.

It was a fellow workman who sowed the seeds of distrust in Tolliver's already jittery confidence in the bank people. His buddy had no truck with banks, and told Tolliver that his money was probably not there at all, at all; that it was probably gone for good and he would never get it back.

Tolliver got to the place, finally, where he could stand the uncertainty no longer; so marching into the bank one day, he handed them the little book they had given him, and demanded his money back. He had a balance of fifteen dollars.

The teller started to hand him a ten and a five-dollar bill, but he demurred. "Tha' ain' my money," he objected heatedly. "I han' it to you t'ree dollars at time. Them wuz all one-dollar bills!" He guessed sadly that his friend, Hawkins, had been right; they didn't have his money after all!

His look of apprehension changed to one of relief when the clerk, with a slight smile, counted out fifteen dollar bills and handed them to him.

He walked to the desk and counted the bills over and over. Four or five times; wanted to be

sure they were all there. He seemed to be reaching a momentous decision within himself, however, because he nodded his head affirmatively several times, and then, evidently having settled the matter to his satisfaction, he marched back and re-deposited the money!

"But doan you git it mixed up no more!" he warned the receiving teller, taking one last lingering look at his little fortune as the man whisked it out of sight.



A DIFFERENCE IN STATUS

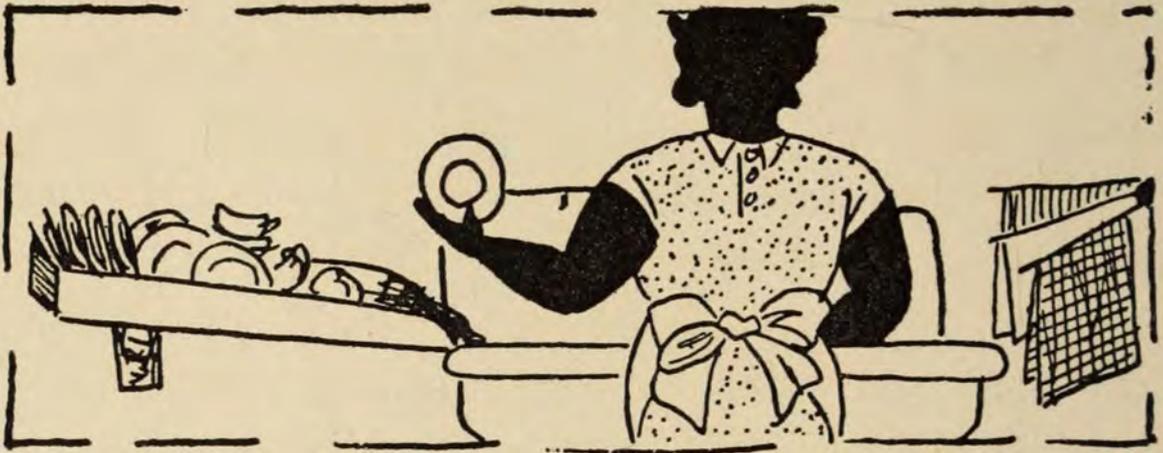
"Was that your wife who brought your lunch today, Decker?" asked the Boss as a trim, nice looking colored woman deposited a package at the desk and quietly departed.

"No, Suh," Decker replied, shaking a negative head. "My wife, she been in the hole for six months. She take pneumonia and pass-away very prompt. The woman whut bring my lunch is the mother of my cheildren!"

PROFICIENCY PLUS

An old man-of-all-work about the place was asked one morning by his mistress if he could do carpenter work.

"Proficiently so, Ma'am," he answered, "but not especially superior!"



THE CHOICE

THE Johnsons were changing maids, as so many Isthmian families do occasionally; and after a long succession of impossible applicants had come and gone, because they were tried and found wanting, Rose appeared.

With a sigh, the well nigh exhausted lady of the house settled back with relief, because Rose looked like the answer to the riddle. She was personable, pleasant, and an excellent cook.

It soon became apparent, however, that while Rose was a cook far above the average, she was a trifle weak on the cleaning proposition. Her housework was done with a slap and a dash; looked all right on the outside, but would not bear close inspection by a finicky housekeeper like the Señora Johnson.

One day the lady of the house remonstrated gently with Rose about this one shortcoming.

She didn't want to hurt her feelings, because, goodness knew, she was miles ahead of the half dozen or so who had preceded her. Mrs. Johnson, therefore, broached the subject carefully, by first tactfully mentioning her good points in an appreciative way; praising her cooking ability, and then proceeding to point out the fact that her housecleaning didn't keep pace with her culinary prowess.

Rose was neither offended nor converted. She was merely amiably and unabashedly acquiescent with everything her mistress said.

"I specks you right, Madam," she said cheerfully, "but you cyan't have everyt'ing, you know. You never gits good biscuits and clean corners from the same maid!"

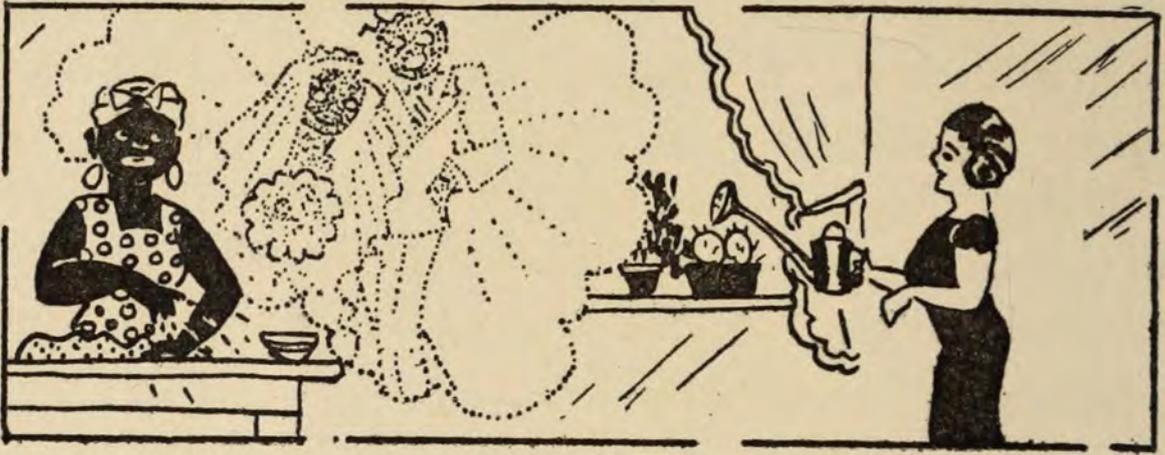
There was no come-back to such an argument. Because, of course, you don't!



PERCEPTION'S PERSIFLAGE

Mrs. Courtney was hesitating at the vegetable counter. She couldn't quite make up her mind what to buy for dinner.

"Sometimes we just don't have the perception to eat, does we?" was the sympathetic comment of the clerk as he waited for her to decide.



THE SPIRITUAL TOUCH

HILDA, giggling with prideful self-consciousness which she was trying valiantly to hold in check, asked her mistress for a week off. She was to be married, she said, but would be back to work the week following the joyful event.

“Why, certainly, Hilda,” the lady said interestedly. After all, one should do what one can to help love along. “So you are going to have yourself a husband, are you?”

Hilda admitted with ill-concealed triumph that she absolutely was, and no mistake about it.

“How did you get him, Hilda?” her mistress asked experimentally, and with a twinkle in her eye.

“I pray for him!” Hilda answered promptly. “I pray de good Lord to send me a husban’, and he sent me Boggs! ’Course, I help de Lord out a little . . .” and she giggled again in an attack of

shy embarrassment. Wishing to be absolutely truthful about the matter, she went on, "I never could a-done it if it hadn't been for de Lord, though, Ma'am. Between us, though, we do de job. And so I marries him tomorrow!"

And with an exalted toss of the head, she went on sprinkling clothes.



THE END IN SIGHT

Mrs. Hartley looked at all her piled-up belongings after the painters had folded their tents and stolen softly away. It is always such a discouraging mess to wade into.

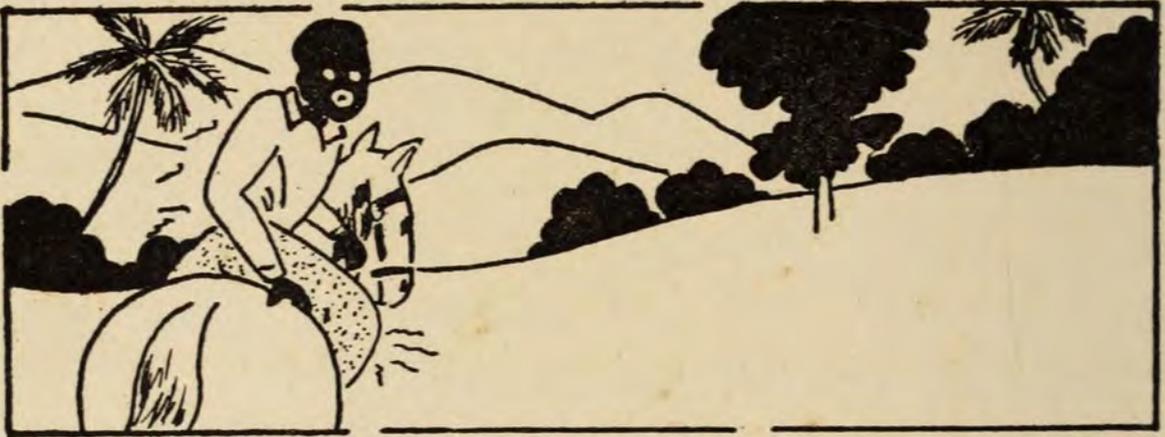
"I wonder if we'll *ever* get things organized again!" she murmured despairingly to her maid, Theodosia.

That afternoon, with the main rooms in shining order once more, the outlook was distinctly brighter.

"It look lak we beginning to git colonized again, Mum!" said Theodosia with a sigh of mingled weariness and satisfaction.

THE GOOD WORD

"I has a script here what tell how good a cook I am!" said a job applicant, fishing into her purse for her letter of recommendation.



ADVERTISING DOES PAY

A FEW months ago, some friends made a trip to the far Interior. They took along as man of all work the family chauffeur, Adolphus, a respectable Jamaican boy who knew nothing about the wilds of country life. And cared less.

Adolphus is a city-reared product and his big eyes rolled in amazement and disapproval at the wildness of the terrain to which he had been so forcibly, and—yes, unwillingly transplanted. Be it said in passing that he didn't like it at all, at all.

Adolphus has a bodily chassis which has become accustomed to the soft leather cushions of a big swanky car, so naturally he didn't take too kindly to the hurricane deck of a native cayuse, where he had to spend much of his time, accompanying the family on their cross-country jaunts. His outlook at life in general became rather darkly grim

and he could hardly wait for the return of the boss to the realms of civilization.

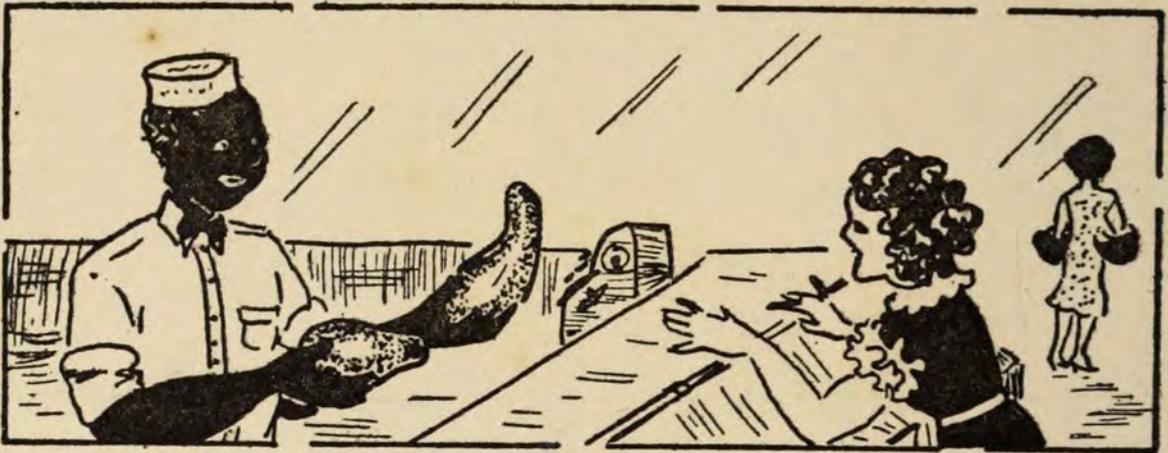
Questioned about what he thought of life in the country, he was bitterly emphatic as he turned thumbs-down on everything about it. His glum opinion was that the ten days of it which he had had to endure, had just about wrecked him beyond repair.

“Mah arms pein me and mah back pein me,” he said in his broad Jamaican accent. “And mah laigs is so sore ah cain’t hardly walk. Ah’ve rode that ole hoss till eve’y bone in mah body is a achin’ me!” He gingerly lifted his shoulders and flexed his biceps tenderly.

“If’n ah ever gits back to Panama, ah’m goin’ be mighty proud!” he opined with a dark pessimism which implied reasonable doubt of such a miracle ever happening. Then with the first spark of hope he had shown for a week, he continued.

“When ah gits back to Panama, d’yuh know whut ah’m gwyne do first off? Ah’m gwyne rub mahself all over . . . mah laigs, mah back, and mah arms, with some good old Asper-een Junior . . . and then ah bet ah’ll feel bettah!”

Which is what must be meant by “advertising consciousness”!



THE SCHOOL OF EXPERIENCE

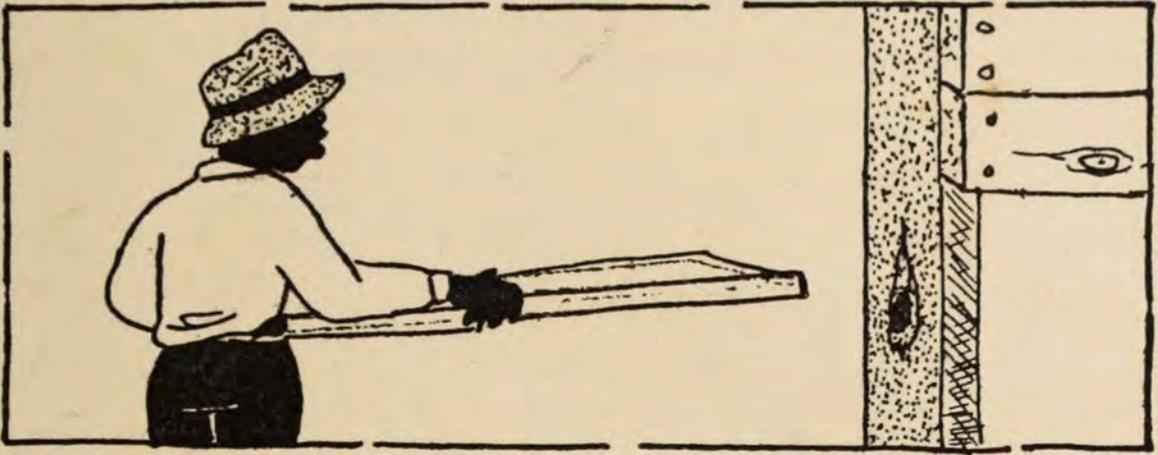
I WAS searching, as so many of us do at times, for some ripe avocados. There were some nice looking ones at the vegetable counter, but they were very green.

“Don’t you suppose these were, maybe, picked a bit too green ever to be good?” I inquired of the serious-faced clerk back of the counter.

He was all helpful solicitude.

“I think these will be all right, Miss,” he said earnestly, turning two of them over and over in his hand. “Just wrap them up in paper and put them in a dark place. After a few days of such experience, I am sure they will be very fine indeed!”

And, such is the mellowing effect of experience—they were!



OIL FOR TROUBLED WATERS

THE night watchman on one of the steam shovels had, among other duties, the filling of the lubricator cups with oil. For this job, a small pipe wrench was used.

One morning he reported to his boss that he couldn't find the "luminator" wrench.

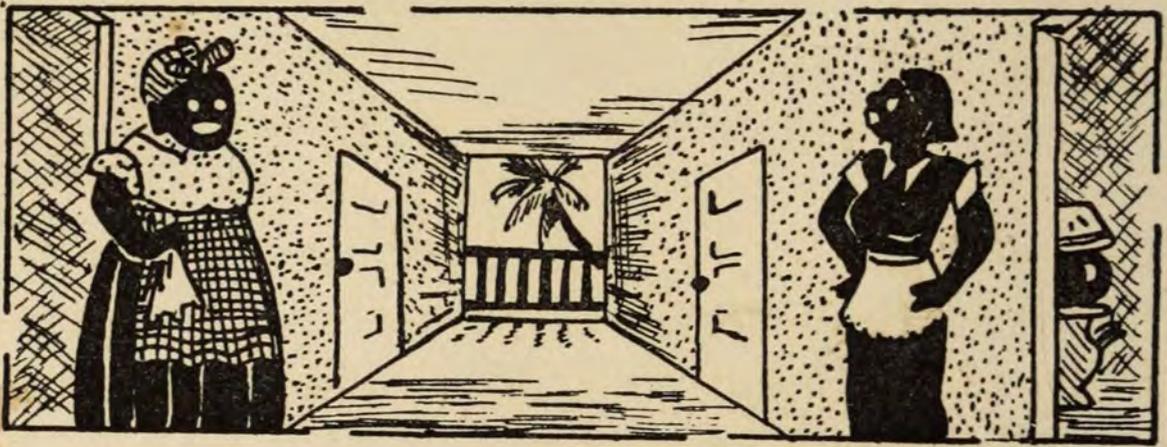
"Charlie," his boss said with a grin, "how many times am I going to have to tell you that that word is *lubricator*, and not *luminator*? It is the *lubricator wrench* you want!"

"Yes, Sar, Boss," Charlie answered obediently, but with no diminution of the worry in his voice. "But because'n dat lubricator wrench don't here, dem luminators ain't been filled yet!"



JOYS OF MOTORING

Chiva driver standing by a stalled bus, "De cyar him sick; him don't go a-tall, a-tall!"



THE OLD ORDER SPEAKETH

A LADY living on Ancon Boulevard has a trig little maid, Mirabelle, who attended school in La Boca, and prides herself upon both her knowledge and use of the American style of diction.

Mirabelle's parents belong to that picturesque army which migrated to the Isthmus during construction days, however; so while Mirabelle has acquired many modern tricks of dress, behavior and speech, she has, nevertheless, been thrown into close contact with the old order all her life. Its phraseology is still her native tongue, and upon occasions of stress, she always reverts to it for emphasis.

In the apartment across the hall from where Mirabelle works, is Maggie, an old black bush woman who has learned enough of white folks' ways to hold down a job, not too efficiently. Her use and understanding of English is the version

learned in Jamaica years ago, with no taint of Americanism to mar its original beauty.

Maggie and Mirabelle are friends after a fashion, and chat back and forth at their work. One day Mirabelle's mistress overheard them deciding to have a race to see who could get through her morning's work first.

Brooms, mops, and soap suds flew at an unprecedented rate in both apartments, and finally Mirabelle, triumphantly shaking out her dust rag, called across the intervening passageway, "Are you finished, Maggie?"

There was a moment of silence and then came Maggie's mystified, "Huuungh?" in reply.

Mirabelle repeated her question, "Are you finished?"

Again came the same answer in greater be-puzlement than before, "Huuuuungh?"

Taking a deep breath, Mirabelle asked for the third time, "I asked if you are *finished!*" she said slowly and distinctly.

Maggie's response was a completely baffled, "Huuuuuuungh?"

Letting out a gusty sigh, Mirabelle evidently decided that when one is in Rome, it is best to speak as the Italians speak if one wants them to understand. Therefore, with a vast resignation, she put her question into words which brought a

ready and understanding response from her friend who then, and then only, knew what she was driving at.

With hands on her hips Mirabelle demanded emphatically, "Do . . . you . . . done?"



DEFINITELY NOT BANANA OIL

Mrs. Milton, a new-comer on the Isthmus, consulted a memo pad while making some purchases at the hardware counter.

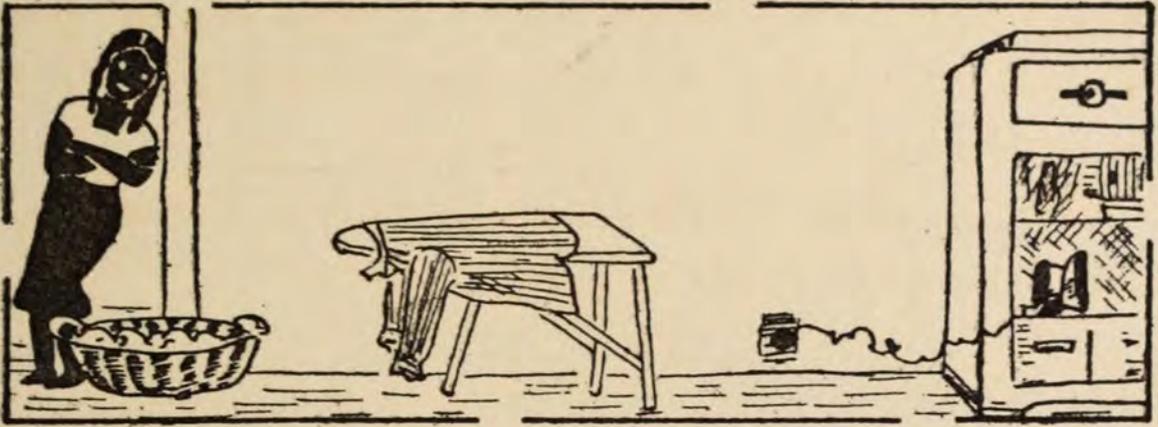
"And now, I want some furniture hile," she said with a note of uncertainty clouding her voice.

"Some *what*, Ma'am?" was the rather startled reply of the colored clerk.

"I'm sure I don't know what it is," she answered worriedly, as she wiped a tiny row of perspiration beads from her troubled brow. "The maid just told me to get some furniture hile. Maybe *you* know what it is. . . ."

"Yes'm, I know," the clerk said, biting back a Mona Lisa grin as he set a bottle of furniture polish on the counter.

She wondered all the way home why it was he seemed to have such a difficult time to keep from laughing.

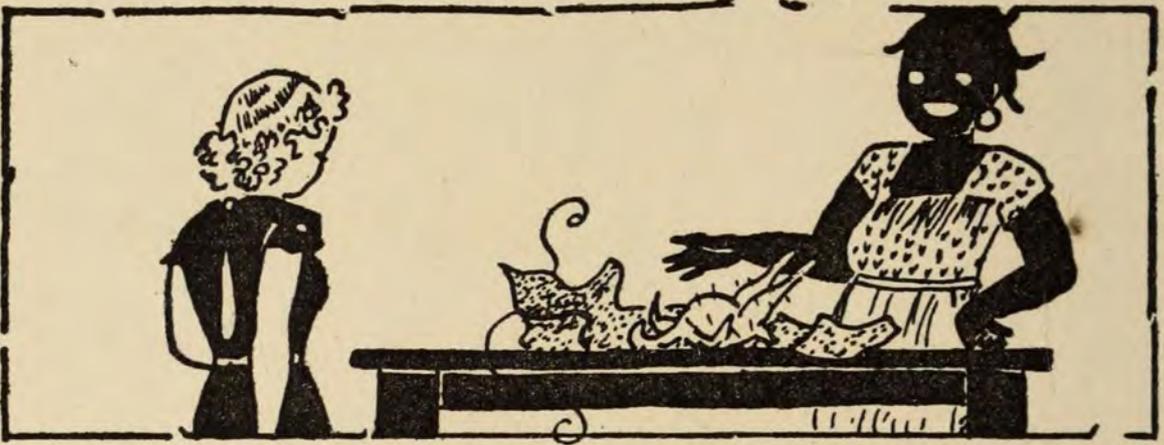


COOL AND COLLECTED

ANY lady accustomed from childhood to the housekeeping arrangements of a grass-roofed hut, has a wide gap to bridge when she moves to town and embarks upon the terrifying career of maid in the highly modern type of home represented by Isthmian households.

We sometimes forget to consider the well-nigh unbridgeable dimensions of such a gap in judging, not too charitably, the reactions of an inexperienced maid; especially when plunged suddenly into the intricacies of a Canal Zone kitchen with all its mechanical and electrical gadgets so mystifying and be-puzzling to a lady unaccustomed to using them.

Personally, I see nothing at all surprising or incongruous about the new maid of the Hamilton's who, finding her electric iron too hot, put it, still connected, into the electric refrigerator to cool off a little before going on with her work!



BATTLING THE CORRUPTION EVIL

THE Wellmans were having chicken for dinner one evening. That afternoon, while Mrs. Wellman was playing bridge with three friends who had dropped in for an after-lunch session, Hyacinth popped her head in at the door and asked for a word with her mistress.

Excusing herself, the hostess wended her way kitchenward to see what was wanted. Hyacinth, holding a gory knife in her hand, looked up with a troubled countenance.

"We has to git somethin' else for dinner, Mistress," she said, "because this 'ere chicken won't do!"

"Why, what is the matter with it?" her lady asked in some surprise. It was a cold-storage commissary chicken, but they are pretty dependable as a general rule.

"This 'ere chicken is corrupt, Ma'am," Hya-

cinth said, making little deprecatory clucking noises with her tongue. "H'tit look h'all right from the h'outside, but it is corrupt in the interior, and 'twon't do. It might corrupt the whole family to h'eat h'it!"

She was right. The chicken was as corrupt in secret places as a ward politician; and since a housewife can't be too careful about keeping the sanctity of her home free from corruption, they had hamburger that night instead!



TOOLS AND TASKS

Slade and Raleigh, two husky Jamaicans, were watching a tennis match in the Ancon courts.

"I know how to plaiy that gaime!" said Slade smugly.

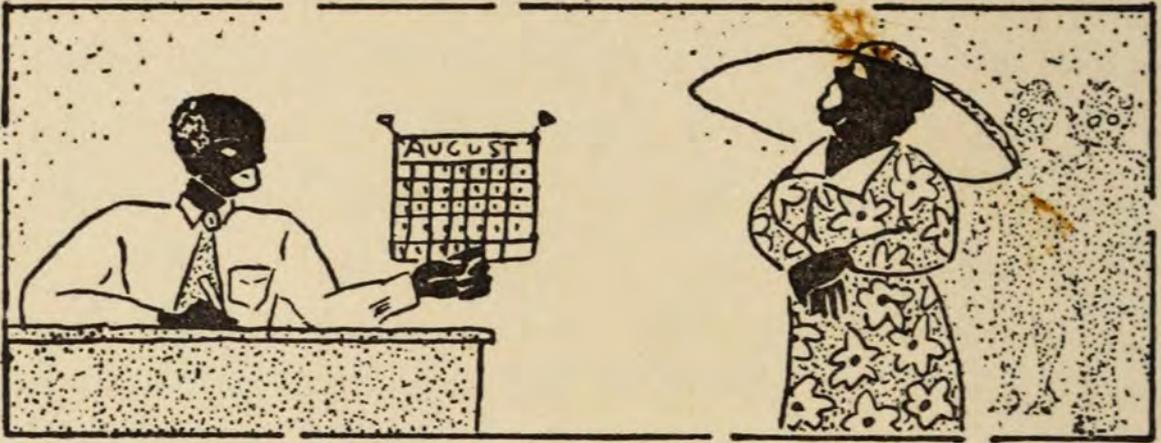
Raleigh's eyes bugged with respectful amazement.

"Nuh! Yo' doan tell me!" he exclaimed with a tinge of awe in his voice.

"Sure, mon," Slade said, swaggering a little. "I kin plaiy it good; only you mus' have the proper stick to plaiy it with. The stick no good onless it tied together with the string, soh!"

THE ONLY OYSTER CAN IN THE ALLEY

Him t'ink he de only mongo on de limb!



HIGH AIR IS PURER

THERE are two factions of folks, especially, who will appreciate this yarn which I picked up one day while skittering hither and yon on the various dark skulduggeries which make up my usual day. One set embodies those more or less disgruntled hausfraus who have to live in the "Flats," while all the time casting envious glances toward their more fortunate sisters who claim the "Heights" as their residential paradise.

The other faction will be composed of Gold Coasters who are thoroughly familiar with the landscape and living conditions in Silver City. The whole point is missing unless one knows something of the unbroken flatness of the terrain thereabouts; as well as knowing that in Silver City, too, there are old and new houses which are bones of social contention, even as new and old

apartments are causes for discontent among the white brigades of the Gold rolls.

Don't ask me to explain why the word "Heights" appended to any address on earth, adds a certain something to its desirability as a dwelling place, but it does. Being able to look down upon one's neighbors, either literally or figuratively, is the chief end and aim of life everywhere; whether in Panama or Kamchatka.

Every woman on the Pacific Side feels vaguely sorry for a sister who tells her she has been assigned quarters in the "Flats." Not that the house may not be both cool and comfortable; but the "Heights" sounds so much more dressy. You'll know exactly what I mean if you'll note the smug satisfaction of the next lady who, a little too carelessly, informs you, "Oh, by the way, we moved to the Heights last week. Lovely quarters, too. You **MUST** come and see us!"

And now that the stage is all set, you may have your story.

In one section of Silver City, there are some lovely new houses. Well, maybe not *bran* new, but newer by a long shot than some of the older edifices which the common run of folks have to live in. And any lady moving from the cluttered areas of the one, into the rarefied and roomy desirability of the other, has every reason in the

world to preen her feathers and be proud-like. Which, of course, she does!

It was some little time ago that a friend stood by while a lady in the Silver Section of the Cristobal Commy gave a delivery order for the following day.

"Your address?" the clerk asked, arranging all those carbon copies without which Uncle Sam's commissaries just couldn't be happy.

The lady, glancing around at the closely packed crowd about her, tilted her head and, with superior satisfaction fairly oozing from every pore, indicated that she lived, now, in the ritzier section of her city.

"Number so-and-so, Silver City HEIGHTS!" she said impressively—and elegantly.



PROMOTING THE CAUSE

Tab had parked his bicycle in a forbidden spot, and had received a traffic ticket for so doing. By the narrowest of margins, he had managed to escape a fine.

"It cause me great perturbation to promote my case with de jedge!" he said, heaving a great sigh of relief.

PATERNITY

It's a wise pelican what know his own father!



IN THE BLOOD OF THE LAMB

EUPHASIA came to work one morning almost bursting with excited enthusiasm. She had had a mighty swelligant time the day before; had been one of the star performers in a big baptizing out in the bay. A halo of sanctity still surrounded her, and she could hardly do her dishes for thinking of the one-way ticket to kingdom-come which was now hers.

Her lady was properly interested, of course. She asked all about what the various pilgrims wore for their immersion, and was regaled with minute and glowing details covering the entire ceremony.

Finally her mistress, joking a bit, said, "But, Euphasia, weren't you afraid the sharks would bite you . . . out in the ocean like that? They are pretty bad around there, I hear!"

“Oh, no, Mistress!” Euphasia assured her solemnly. “When they’s a baptesment, de Lord he always sew up all de sharks’ mouths! When you walks de glory road, de sharks they keep them distance, because de Lord he make they to understand they mustn’t touch a sister or brother what is being washed in de blood of de Lamb! But jes’ to make sure, though, de Lord he always sew up they mouths during a baptesment!”



SWEET MYSTERY OF LIFE

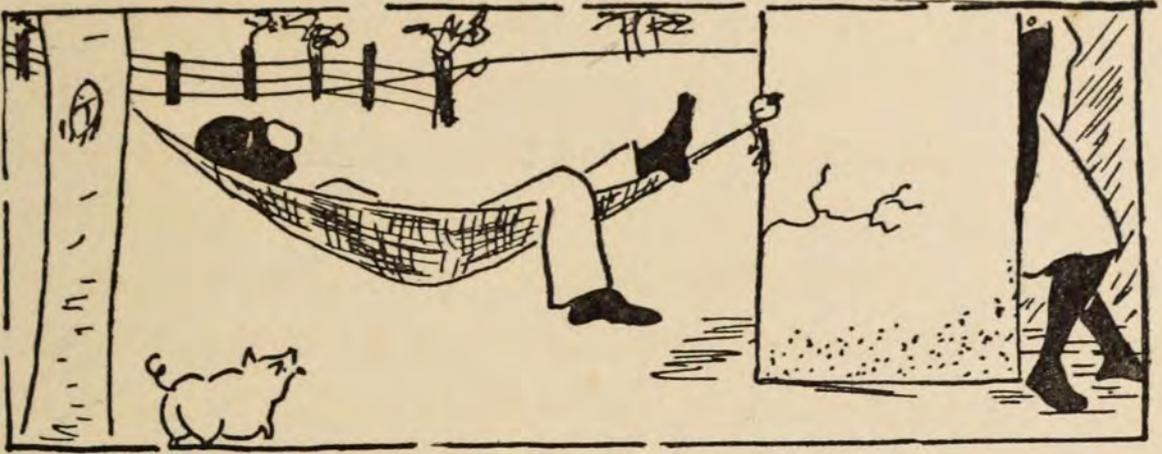
“Has your wife been in the hospital, Jenks?” asked the boss one morning as his helper appeared for work. He was glancing over a deduction slip preparatory to signing it.

“Yes, suh, Boss,” Jenks answered with a lift to his shoulders. “She been engaged in a serious case of baiby-makin’!”

NO GRASS ON BUSY STREETS

Morella, exhorting her unwilling and reluctant offspring to greater exertion in the flowery fields of knowledge gathering, reminded him that a dull intellect is always a handicap to any gentleman of ambition.

“Can’t never cut no grass with a rusty machette!” she told him pointedly.



SOUTH SEAS TRIVIA

HALLYBELLE is a Barbadian lady who works for some Gatun friends. Hallybelle's health seems to be about one hundred per cent perfect, but she frequently announces quite cheerfully, if not triumphantly, of a morning, that she was slightly indisposed the night before; had had "gas on her heart!" She has gas on her heart about once a week.

Hallybelle also suffers mysteriously from a "jerk in de feets." Since she always has the jerk in her feets at locations other than her place of employment, her mistress has no idea to what she refers.

If food has become spoiled, Hallybelle mentions the fact by saying, "This cabbage cawn't eat, Ma'am. It don't good any more!"

When she is ready to leave for the day, she says, "All finish, Ma'am; so now I gwine a mi yard!"

Hallybelle uses an intriguing collection of proverbs to drive home an argument at times. A colored boy who does grass-cutting about the place borrowed twenty-five cents from her some time ago and she had a little trouble collecting it; the debtor being inclined to welsh on the paying of the bill.

One day her mistress heard a heated altercation going on under the house; Hallybelle demanding her twenty-five cents, and the boy promising to pay it as soon as he could get it. Hallybelle scorned such "sweet mouthings" that didn't mean nothing!

"Promise cawn't bile de pot!" she informed him angrily. She then threw in a few dark hints about the police who would "make him trot"; and it turned the trick, evidently. The boy fished into his pocket and gave her the quarter with alacrity!

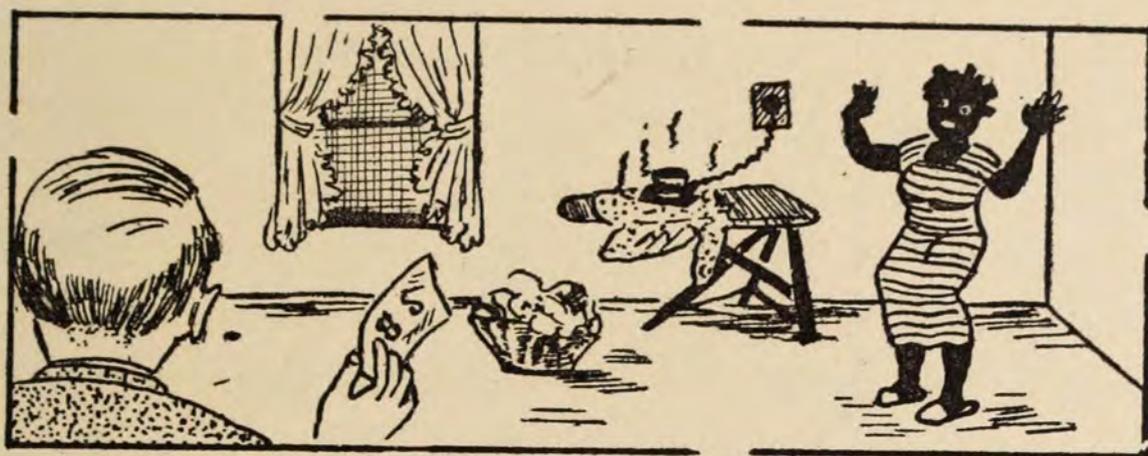


WHAT'S IN A NAME?

To Mattie, parsley is a hard word to say; so hard that she uses her own term for it.

"I allus puts some parcel into my potato salad," she explains as she snips a few of the crisp crinkly tufts into the bowl she is filling.

"Parcel is nice for so many things!" she adds with a little sigh of complacency.



NARROW ESCAPE

HANNAH and Mr. Smith, the boss-man where she works, are especially good friends. He always talks "Jamaican" to her . . . to her great and giggling delight.

Hannah and her Mr. "Simit" have considerable dealings in the lottery ticket business. She has dreams and hunches; and he buys tickets accordingly. They haven't accomplished much of a remunerative nature so far, but they still have hopes. And there is much animated discussion regarding all the interesting details of the bargain they have made . . . that if and when he ever wins a thousand dollars on one of her hunches (which seems rather remotely improbable at the present rate!), he will give her a hundred of it.

Aside from their communal lottery holdings, however, Mr. Simit has a number of his own

which he buys each week. Hannah always gets and brings this to him as she comes to work; she being a friend of the old vendor who sells it.

He won a hundred fifty dollars on this personally selected ticket not long ago, but didn't even know it until his wife, during the middle of the week, said in some surprise, "Why, Pete, look at these lottery numbers! Isn't that one of the tickets you buy?"

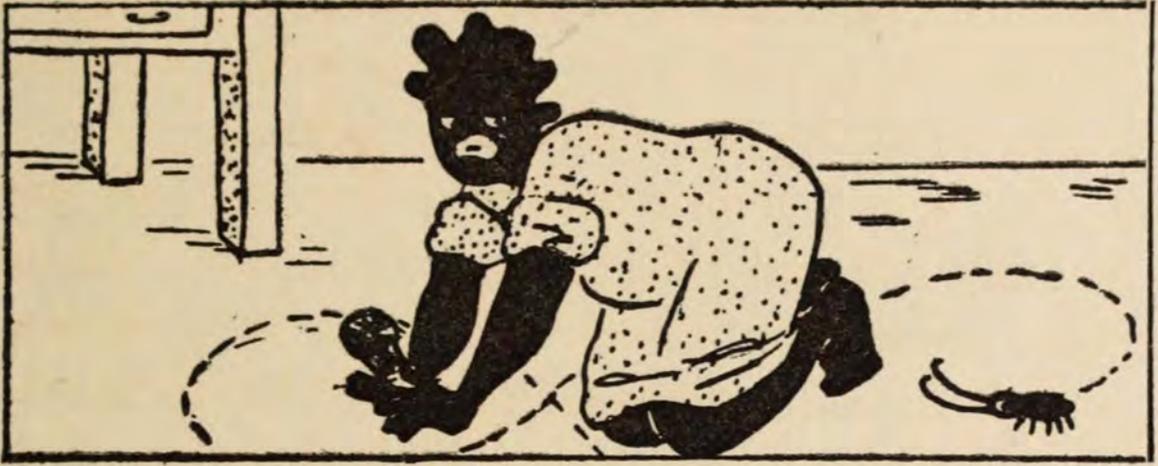
He checked up, and, sure enough, found that he had won a hundred fifty dollars. Not on one of Hannah's hunches, but, nevertheless . . .

That afternoon he sauntered into the kitchen where Hannah was ironing, and handed her five dollars. At her look of complete befuddlement, he said, "That for you, Hannah. Las' Sunday you win me!"

She looked so completely amazed and at sea that he went on to elucidate. "You know how come? Why, last Sunday the number you get me each week, it strike. Strike for one hundred fifty dollar! You win me, Hannah; you win me!"

Hannah set her iron down breathlessly and lifted her hands into the air.

"Oh, me Lawd, me Gawd, Mr. Simit," she exclaimed fervently. "An' if'n I had die in my sleep las' night, I never would a know it!"



THE STRUGGLE FOR CONTACTS

LUELLA was undergoing an experience familiar to all Isthmian housekeepers. There were cockroaches in her kitchen. She finally spoke about it, worriedly, to the lady of the house.

“Well . . . why don’t you kill them, Luella?” her mistress inquired reasonably.

“I does strive to do so, Ma’am,” Luella replied grimly. “But ever time I endeavors to contack ’em, they secretes themselves in the cree-vices!”

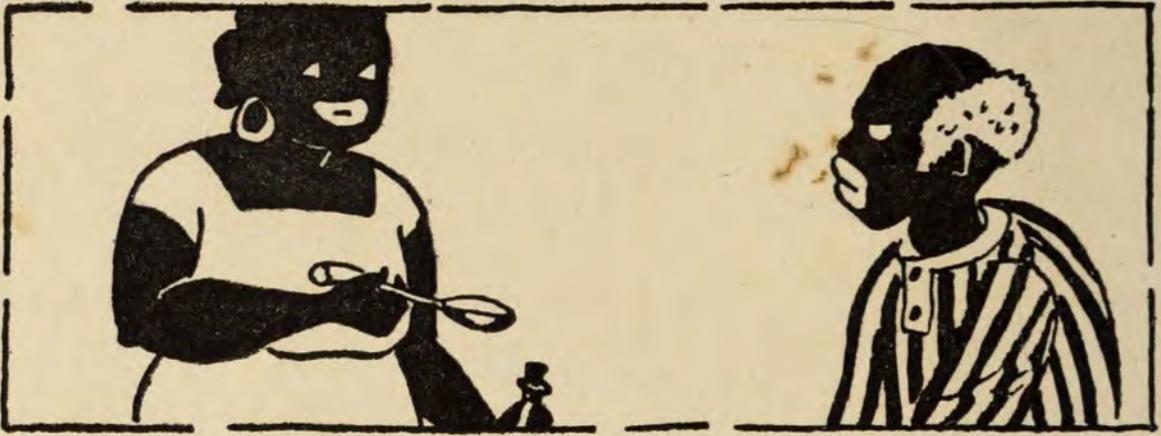


SILVER RECOMMENDATION FOR AIR MAIL

W’y, Mon, de h’air mail stamp, him make bird speed!

THE BOSS AWAY

Colored boy reporting that his boss has phoned to say he wouldn’t be in until later, “Him gone and him send to say dat him don’t return back as yet!”



RUMBLINGS OF DISASTER

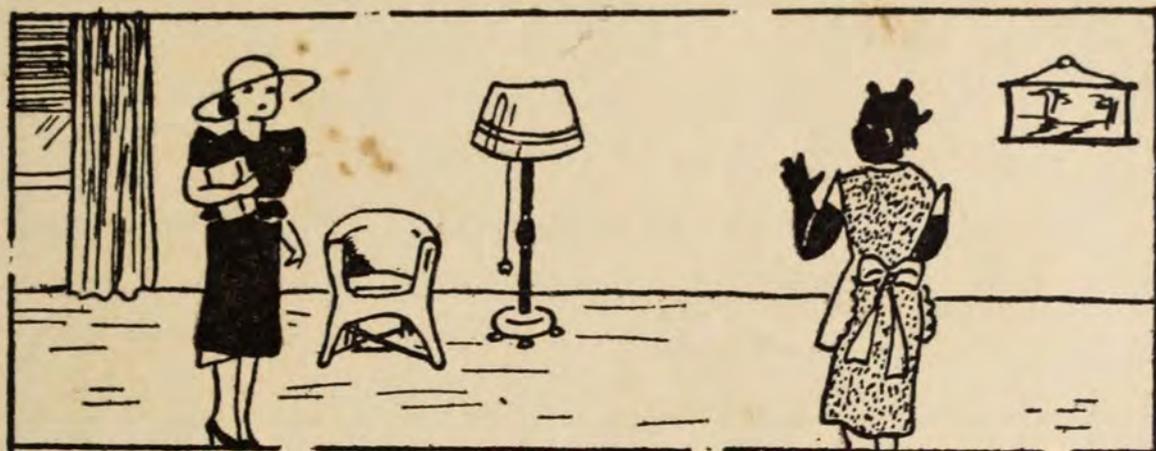
A NUMBER of years ago the S. S. Colombia of the Panama Mail Line ran aground off the coast of Nicaragua and was brought into Balboa for dry-dockage and repairs. She was heavily loaded, her cargo being mostly cases of canned fruit from California.

During the repair work, a number of these cases were broken into by the workers of the various crews. One American riveter's helper rolled on the deck moaning and groaning. After he was able to talk to the doctor who was summoned, he said, "Boss, I did h'eat two can of dem peach, and dey did give me a rumbling in me belly, and a roaring in me bowels!"



MATERNAL ADMONITION

Impatient mother to child reaching for her sewing basket, "Let it be!"



THE BEAUTY OF TRUTH

CERISA was nothing if not outspoken, and was by no slightest stretch of the imagination, a respecter of either persons or position. When she had anything to say, it was pretty likely to come bouncing out; regardless of place, circumstances, or surroundings. She simply said what she thought—which, sometimes, was plenty.

She was an invaluable household asset; being cheerful, cleanly, energetic, capable and efficient. Was a good cook, a superlative laundress, and nice with the children. She was, in short, what Isthmian housewives classify wistfully as a jewel of a maid.

Cerisa's one fault was that she was likely to blurt out embarrassing truths upon highly inauspicious occasions, and no amount of despairing remonstrances had the slightest effect upon her. If the President himself had walked in with a

smudge on his collar Cerisa would probably have managed, somehow or other, to let him know about it before he got out of the house.

Needless to say, she frequently got her mistress into uncomfortably hot water by her unsolicited frankness before people who did not know her little idiosyncrasy. Friends of the family all understood, of course, and insisted good-naturedly that they were better men and women for having Cerisa straighten the kinks out of their egos occasionally.

The high spot of Cerisa's career came one afternoon when the wife of a celestially high official came to call, very formally.

Cerisa, in trim uniform and dignified decorum, opened the door and, with her usual impressive demeanor, conducted the visitor to a seat on the wide, cool porch.

Just before leaving the room, however, and before the lady had had time to sit down, Cerisa gave her a severely appraising glance and said with beautiful but startling frankness, "My gawd, Lady, your slip shows a mile!"



FRUSTRATION

Lottery tickets dem always do me fail. I gwine take my money and chuck h'it in the Cut!



UNDERSTUDYING SOLOMON

CHARLOTTE is strong for proverbs. She has a bountiful store of them on tap and trots them out upon any and every occasion where there is a bit or room to squeeze them in.

It would be highly interesting to know exactly what David, Ben Franklin, and other ancient coiners of pat phrases, would think of the way Charlotte "Jamaican-izes" their output, in order to fit her needs. Safe to say, however, that though they might be slightly startled, they couldn't help being entertained.

"A h'egg in de 'and is worth two in de bush!" she says with a delightful disregard for accurate locations of speech figures.

"A stitch in tyme save many a patch on de pants seat!" is another favorite remark made with a sage wag of the head.

When wishing to give advice that it might be

just as well not to trifle with an individual who is known in common parlance as a bad hombre, she narrows her shrewd old eyes and says with slow emphasis, "Never call an aligator *long-nose*, on-twell you done safely past he!"



CONFIDENTIALLY SPEAKING

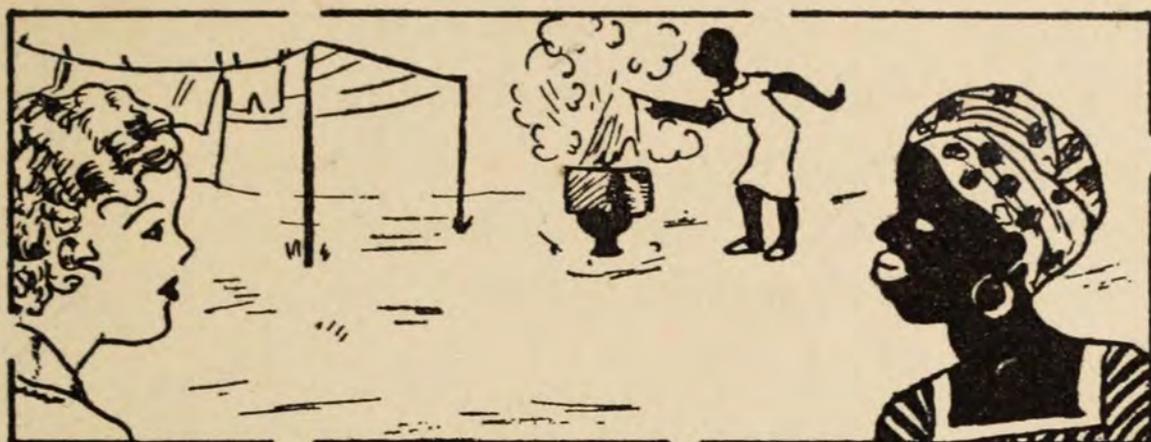
There is one P.R.R. conductor on the Isthmus who admits, red-faced and flustered, that never again, s'help him, will he be so brash as to inquire too closely into a lady passenger's personal troubles.

One day as the train was just ready to start from Colon, a huge colored woman approached the Silver car. She hitched along the depot platform at a snail's pace and the conductor spoke with some irritation.

"Hurry up, there!" he called. "What makes you so slow, anyway?"

The lady paused for a moment's rest as she prepared to make the hitch up the steps. Leaning toward the startled official and smiling ingeniously, she spoke in a stage whisper which was easily heard ten feet away.

"It's mi drawers, Suh," she confided. "Dey kind of cramps me in de crotch!"



THE PURIFYING FLAME

MY neighbor's new laundress appeared at the back door one morning after she had been scrubbing for an hour or so down under the house. She desired a word with the mistress.

"The clothes is all washed, ma'am," she announced, "and now do you want I should burn them?"

"*Burn* them? Good heavens, no!" exploded the surprised lady. "What ever put that into your head?"

"Well," replied the wash lady with a slight shrug. "Some ladies likes 'em burnt, and some don't. Me, I don't care which I does. I do just how-so you like it!"

By this time, sensing a slight misunderstanding in the air, the lady of the house said, "Wait a minute . . . just how do you mean *burn* them, Azelia?"

The queen of the tubs with difficulty suppressed a sigh. White folks can be so awful dumb at times, you know.

"W'y, to white them, ma'am," she said. "You burns them in a pot on the stove to make they whiter!"

A small glimmer of comprehension began seeping into the beclouded atmosphere.

"Oh, you mean *boil* them . . . is that it?" she inquired, relieved.

"Yes'm, I specks so," was the indifferent rejoinder. "You burns they in a big kittle of water on the stove to make they more clean!"

She has washed for my friend for six years now, and has "burnt" the clothes once a week during all that time. She still does.



THE STINGING LASH

"The rain lash me all the way!" reported Dolly, explaining her sodden appearance when she reported for work one morning.

ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP

Lottie, asked by her mistress how many lodges she belonged to, replied, "Five, Ma'am, but me don't financial in t'ree of dem!"



YOUTH'S HANDICAP

THERE is a rather widespread tendency among a considerable segment of our colored community, to dismiss the convention of legal matrimony as just so much unnecessary formality. When people, either white or black, get tired of one another and desire to dissolve a partnership, they will do it anyhow, regardless of whether they are married or not. Then, why bother about a ceremony which, when it is no longer tolerable, is both troublesome and expensive to break?

Thus the West Indian reasons, and in view of our divorce rate, he isn't far from right. Certainly, lifelong partnerships without benefit of church or state, are not at all rare among them. Children are a much more binding tie than a few words mumbled by a preacher or a magistrate, and a flock of children is one thing the West Indian always has in exaggerated numbers. A man does-

n't easily walk out on a family of little ones. Therefore, conjugal fidelity is just about as prevalent where common-law marriages prevail, as it is among our so-called higher circles.

The West Indian has no qualms or apologies to offer about his state of unsanctified matrimony, but he is oftentimes rather put to it to explain his peculiar position to his white bosses. White folks so often have funny ideas about such-like things, you know.

An illustration in point was a Jamaican gentleman who appeared at the colored maternity ward of Gorgas Hospital one Sunday afternoon to visit a lady in whom he was interested. He was interested not only in the patient herself, but also in the little dusky baby she had recently presented to the world. It was, proudly, his'n.

The nurse looked at the four little inky stair-steps accompanying him, and asked if he were the patient's husband.

"Well, yes and no, Madam!" he said, fumbling his hat in his hands in confused embarrassment.

"But this is your baby, isn't it?" she said, indicating the little blanketed bundle which was being taken in to its mother.

"Oh, yes'm. Yes MA'AM!" he assured her with enthusiasm.

"And are these your children, too, as well as

hers?" she persisted interestedly, looking at the wide-eyed pickaninnies ranged circumspectly in a row behind their father. He admitted with evident pride that they indeed were. All of them.

"All of these children, besides this new one . . . and still you aren't married to their mother!" the nurse went on with evident amusement and incredulity. "How does that happen? Won't she have you?"

"Well, no, Madam, that isn't it," he said searching painfully for some way of making her understand this so very understandable (to him) situation. Then with a flash of inspiration he found the answer.

"You see, Madam, she is too young, as yet, for matrimony!"



DISGUSTED PATRON AT KENNELWORTH

De dog he bite me and de horse he kick me!
Next time I gwine send my money to Mr. Sears-
buck!

MESSAGE CENTER

Friend bringing word that the gardener can't report for duty that day: "Him send to say dat him don't here!"



SPRING ZEPHYRS

JOB had gone to see the dispensary doctor about a heavy chest cold he had contracted. Since the case looked a bit serious, he was sent to the hospital. When the ward physician asked him how long he had had his cough, he replied characteristically, "Not *too* long, Suh!"

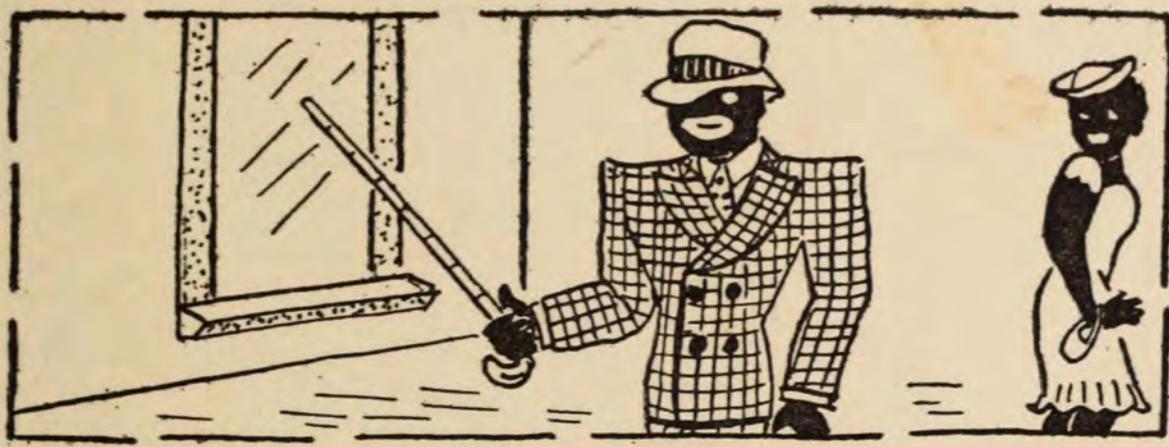
"But how long is that?" the prying medico wanted to know.

"Long enough!" was the very helpful rejoinder.

After a bit more insistent prodding on the doctor's part had elicited the information desired, he asked, "Just how did you happen to get this cold anyway, Job?"

Job's unhesitating reply was beautifully clear and enlightening.

"Well, you see, Doctah, Suh," he said, "I had a hole in mi flannels, and I cotch a drawft!"



FASHION IS SPINACH

A SUITOR paying admiring court to Hattisue was dismissed with a scornful toss of the head. He was what we would classify as a dandy, or fop, who spent all his substance on fine raiment, to the neglect of the more necessary staples of life.

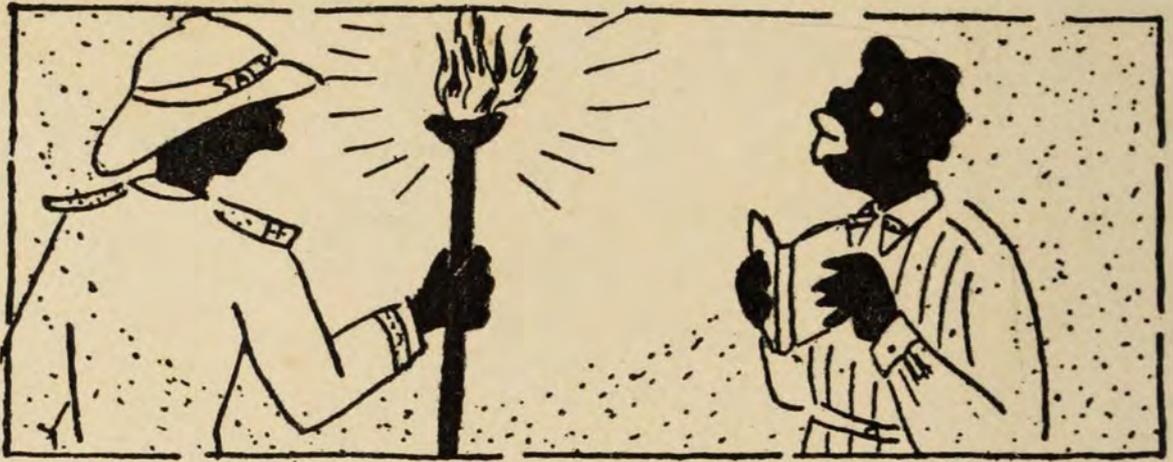
Hattisue, telling her mistress about it, stated her attitude toward the gentleman by saying, "Him too follow fashion!"

And then, to leave no doubt as to her opinion of people who bend all their energies and resources toward making a big show before the public, she added a contemptuous, "The smaller de crab, de higher he try to wave him claw!"



PATTERN FOR LIVING

Early to bed and early to rise is de bes' way to git a job on de ship docks!



THE LOST CORD

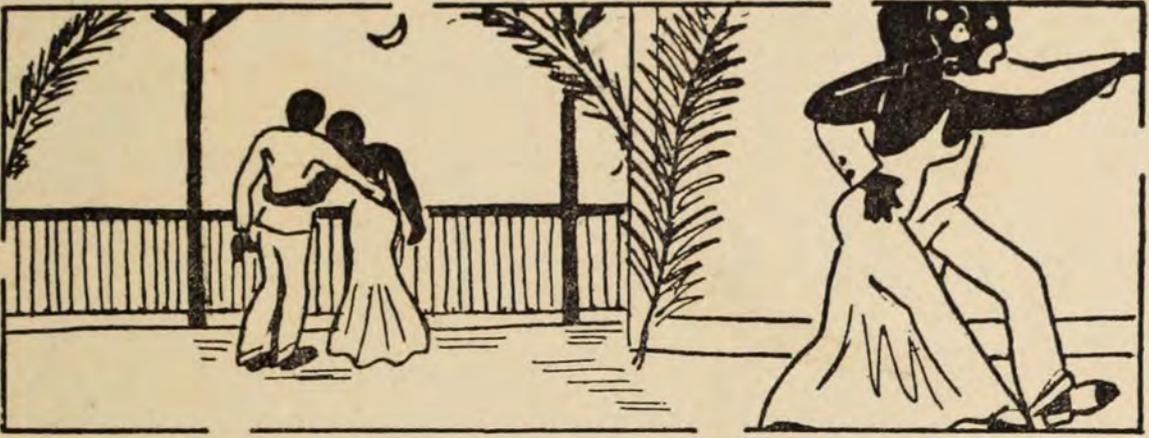
SELMA had considerable difficulty in keeping tab on all the numerous household gadgets with which she worked. The house was so large and had so many places for one's tools to secrete themselves, that she was forever hunting something. When the lost article was particularly elusive, Selma generally called upon the Lord for help in locating it.

“Oh Lawd, rattle me the dust pan!” she would chant ingratiatingly, in a tone calculated to melt even the heart of a stern Deity. “Rattle me the dust pan, Oh Lawd, and yours be the praise and glory forever, amen!”



ADVICE TO THE YOUNG

Let not yo' right hand know whut lottery ticket yo' lef' hand is reachin' fo'!



LIFE MINUS JOY

WHEN President Roosevelt started scratching around for some device to pull his country out of its self-admitted attack of the doldrums a few years ago, and pounced upon the fifteen per cent salary cut for federal employees as one way out of the dilemma, I believe he wotted little the far-reaching effects of such a move.

Little did he foresee the club memberships that would be dropped; or the women who would dispense with a regular maid and, to the considerable improvement of their figures, start doing part or all of their own housework. He had no way of foretelling the number of cancelled vacation trips, the curtailment of individual entertaining, and the old cars that must put in a few more years of service, pending the recovery of the lost largess.

Aside from all these, I doubt if even as desperate an executive as the President of a depressed nation, would have been so hard-hearted

as to set the wheels of such an innovation in motion if he could have known that in some instances the shrunken income would mean the loss of some of life's richest and most succulent features.

In order to clarify that last statement, I am minded of a story told me by a masculine friend in one of the widely-spread branches of the Q.M. service.

Among the numerous employees who were definitely distressed or disgruntled over the salary slash, was an old colored helper in the Q.M. Department, y-clept Herman, who had considerable difficulty in understanding just what it was all about, anyway. He wasn't much concerned over the discussions of it ahead of time; merely considering it as just so much white folks' business which didn't particularly concern him one way or another. However, when he received his first shrunken pay envelope, he came lamenting and mumbling to find out what it meant.

Patiently it was explained to him that the nation was in financial difficulties; and how, in order to help out, every person working for the government, from the President down to the smallest messenger boy, was having his salary cut fifteen per cent. Whether the explanation soaked in, is a moot question; but he did understand that from then on, he had to get along on about four dollars

less pay a month than he had been getting; and he loudly bewailed the loss.

"It's powerful hard, Boss," he said dolefully. "It jest looks like I gets no more pleasure out of life, at all, at all!"

He stood for a few minutes twisting his battered hat in his hands while he pondered deeply within himself the gloom that had overspread his days.

"You see, Boss," he said, anxious to get it off his chest, "I has a wife and five child'en to take keer of, and it pretty hard to do. I pays de rent and I buys de food. I gets de boots and dresses fo' de child'en and de ole woman. But I has always managed to save out one dollar for myself for romance. But now——!" His face was clouded with woe and gloom as he shuffled toward the door with the air of one for whom existence has lost all savor; all sparkle.

"Now," he muttered dolefully, "betimes I pays de rent and buys de tobacco and rice and clo'es, I won't have even a dime left for myself to have any romance. Not one t'in dime!"

And, facing a dun-hued horizon from which all rosy expectation of romantic inspiration had fled, he shuffled down the steps, still muttering dolorously against a low-down fate that could serve a fellow so.



SOME GRAPES ARE SOUR

ONE day a friend, on her way to the commissary, passed a colored laborer, lunch pail in hand, who had stopped under a mango tree as he was going home from work. He was looking wistfully at a big mango far out on a high limb, which he had evidently tried to reach with a pole, but couldn't. Physical prowess having failed, he was still unbalked, and was trying moral suasion on it.

"Mango!" he said coaxingly, "Why you no fall? I's waitin' on you; doan you know dat?"

The mango continued stubborn and obdurate; whereupon he called up a few shock troops in his campaign of thought control.

"Mango," he said severely and in a business-like manner calculated to convey the impression that he was tired of fooling, now, and would tolerate no more nonsense. "Ain't you goin' for to fall? Ain't no use'n your tryin' to hide, neither,

'cause I'se lookin' rot at you. You bettah fall!" And an ominous, threatening note crept into his voice.

The mango, unpersuaded, still sat stolidly on its limb.

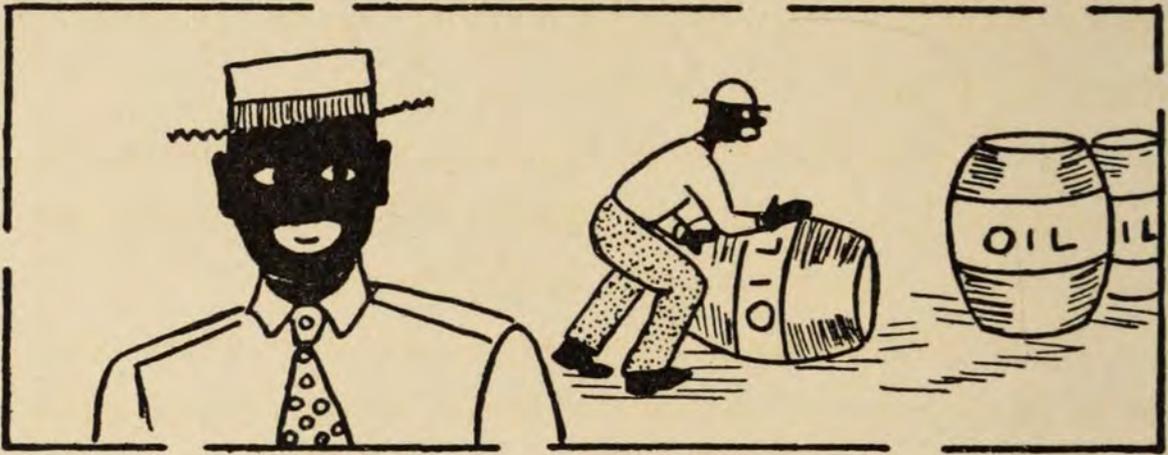
After a few more minutes, during which time he harangued the mango in vain, trying to coax it off its perch, he stalked off in high disgust. Shrugging contemptuously, he muttered, "Ole green mungo . . . prob'ly no good nohow! An' anyway, de Lord sayeth cursed be de green fruit; for him as eats it will sure have a pain in him belly!"



RETIRING IN CONFUSION

Towne, an old Jamaican laborer with many years of service to his credit, was deemed deserving of a pension under the recent act. He met with the retirement and pension board, but all the fine talking sort of mixed him up. He was afraid he was going to lose out on his cherished dream, what with all the white men's talking and carrying on.

"I doan kere fer no retirement, Suh," he said worriedly to the chairman in charge of the meeting. "I jus' has an instinct to quit work and go home to Jamaica to die!"



THE SEEING EYE

THOMAS chores for the Browns. Cuts grass, washes the car, beats the rugs, waters the flowers, and serves as handy man around the place in general. Although not speedy, he is fairly dependable, and they like him.

Thomas belongs to the old school of Jamaicans who came here during the early days of the construction work, and he has never learned to manipulate the queer brand of language which the white American folks talk so glibly. He speaks the broad Jamaican version of the King's h'English, and his powers of expression are something fearful and wonderful to contemplate.

One day he was describing a friend of his to the Boss, who had promised to give him the once-over with a view to hiring him for a few days. Thomas wanted to be sure his boss-man didn't make a mis-

take and hire the wrong fellow, so he described him in detail.

“You will know him, Bawss,” he said earnestly, “because him a not too brown fellow of considerable heft. And him eye lean, Bawss!”

That afternoon, sure enough, the boss-man, who understood perfectly, hired himself a slightly hefty brown man who was cross-eyed!



M. I. K.

“Go on, Lady, and take some more ham,” urged Nastursia in a sudden burst of friendliness while serving a luncheon guest at the Hiltons.

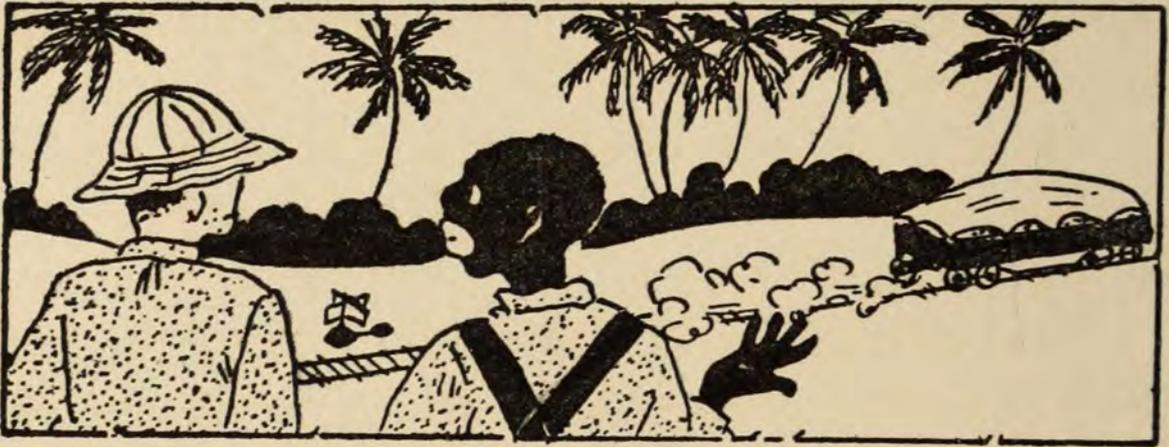
“Don’t you worry none about me, now,” she went on ingratiatingly as the guest still shook a negative head. “They’s plenty left for me in the kitchen. I already done took it out!”

WEST INDIAN SOCIAL NOTE

Another little chocolate drop arrived Tuesday evening to gladden the hearts and home of Mr. and Mrs. Jarwind Beeman of Silver City.

FALL OF THE MIGHTY

The higher a monkey climb up a tree, the harder he hit the ground if him foot slip.



THE VEXING HOUR

A NEW man was relieving the vacationing boss in charge of the Balboa Railroad yards.

The regular boss-man was noted among the help as being a bit quick on the trigger when it came to bawling out his colored crew for the blunders they so frequently made. There was no reason for the "boys" to assume that the new boss-man would be any different.

When a car of rubbish on Diablo Dump got away one day, therefore, due to the carelessness of a colored helper, he got all braced to face the music. He knew he would catch fits from the regular boss in such a situation, and took for granted that the new man would give him the same tongue-lashing, if not a worse one. Sheepishly and apprehensively he waited for the customary linguistic deluge; and when it failed to

materialize, he was rather surprised; not to say disconcerted.

"Boss, you doan vex?" he finally asked; cautiously, but with a curiosity which simply had to be appeased.

"No, Gout, I guess that wouldn't bring the car back," was the philosophic reply, as directions for reclaiming the runaway were given. (The new boss-man had won twenty dollars on the lottery the day before, and was feeling mellow and kindly toward all mankind for the time being!)

Gout let out a big sigh of relief. Shrugging his shoulders, however, and speaking with respectful awe of the absent one, he opined, "Well . . . ! If'n Mr. Van here, and it happen soh . . . whew! Him be vex as cats!"



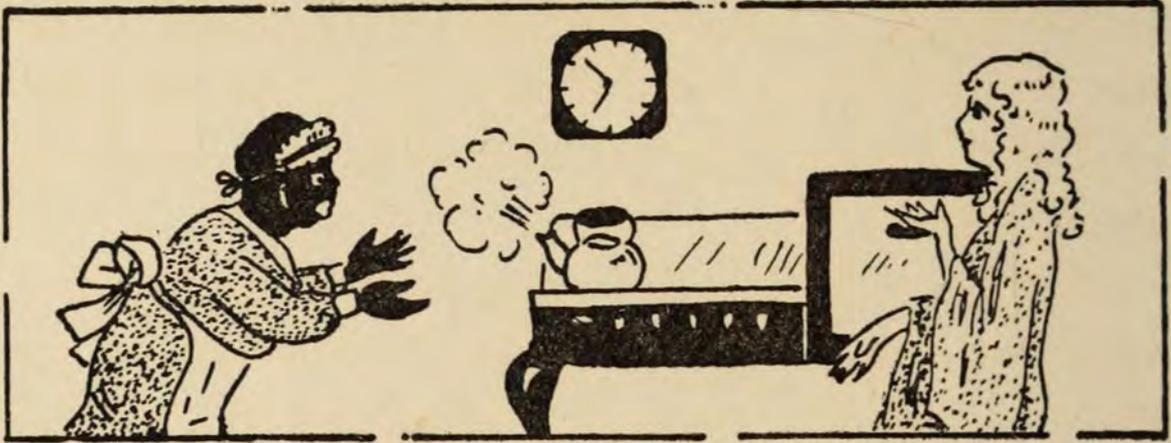
THE FUNCTIONING FUNCTION

"You been sick, Carson?" the Boss asked of a colored carpenter who had been missing on the job for a day or so.

"Yes, Suh, Mistah Mock," was the doleful reply, "Mi liver not functionating in de proper sperit, suh!"

ENCOURAGEMENT

De early bird kotch de job!



THE EARLY BIRD

THERE is a new generation of colored folks here who have had good schooling, and who are bright and alert and capable. No chance of anything very exasperating or amusing happening where they are concerned. The older generation, some of them, however—well! That is a different matter altogether. Language differences account for much of the misunderstanding which occurs between hirer and hire-ee, of course.

The King's English as spoken by His Majesty's loyal West Indian subjects is a thing fearful and wonderful to contemplate; and at times causes much distress to both mistress and maid. Or to master and "boy," as the case may be. Mental differences make up part of the picture, naturally.

Apropos of which, I doubt if this little incident could have happened anywhere else in all our

broad land. A friend came out second best in the encounter; the honors, if any, going to an aged and very obtuse, but determinedly well meaning maid, named Mary.

Mary is accustomed to start slap-slapping and banging and dropping things in the kitchen at seven o'clock each morning, Sunday and all. The family rather like a lazy Sunday morning, however, so one Saturday evening when Mary was starting home, the lady of the house told her not to come the next day until eight o'clock. Mary seemed rather crestfallen at the news—which struck the lady as strange.

Next morning a little before seven, the early Sabbath stillness was shattered by the clang of the door bell. It was Mary, wanting in.

"Why, Mary, I told you not to come this morning until eight!" she was told in some surprise.

"Yes'm, I know, Madam," Mary said apologetically, "but I jes' couldn't make it any sooner, Ma'am!"

"But, Mary," the lady of the house was puzzled and mystified. "I said to come at *eight* and it is now only *seven*!"

"Yes, Mist-ress." Mary was plainly distressed and sorry, "I tried real hard, Ma'am, but this was jes' the bes' I could do!"

My friend, being only a weak woman, threw in the towel and let the matter rest.

(Note: Mary can't tell time, but knows where seven is on the clock. Telling her to come an hour later mixed her all up. She didn't know which side of the seven was the hour she was supposed to get to work!)

Mary keeps on coming at seven.



THE SAVING GRACE

The straw-boss foreman of a colored gang has for many years been accustomed to having his men "stand the colors" just before work each morning. It is something like the little flag salute at the beginning of a school day, and the men like it. They always sing "God Save the King!" and then reach for their picks and shovels.

The morning after the death of the late King George, the gang was in a quandary. There they were, ready to "stand colors," and there was no king to save. A hasty consultation settled the matter satisfactorily, however. In lusty enthusiasm, they sang, "God Save Uncle Sam!"

WISDOM OF THE SAGES

Honesty, he de bes' policy if'n you wants to keep on working in de commissary!



THE UNCLINCHABLE ARGUMENT CLINCHED

FRESALINA, a buxom matron of Red Tank, who might best be classified as a conscientious objector to the evil of race suicide, was preparing to add another contribution to the colored census figures of the Canal Zone.

Fresalina had already made eight or ten such donations previously, but they had all been of the single denomination. She now had a hunch that this time she was due for a double, and was proportionately elated.

Wishing to make sure, so she could advertise the fact to envious sisters in the settlement, she consulted a dispensary doctor, who was inclined to agree with her personal diagnosis of the situation.

The district nurse, visiting her a short time after, jokingly scoffed at her predictions.

"Aw, Fresalina," she said laughing, "you aren't going to have twins; you just think you are. It will probably be just another of those big fat babies like you always have!"

"Oh, no, Mist-ress!" Fresalina assured her earnestly. "De doctah he tell me so, too. He say for true. Glory be, I sure, now; because, when de doctah put de trumpet to de belly, he hear de pier!"

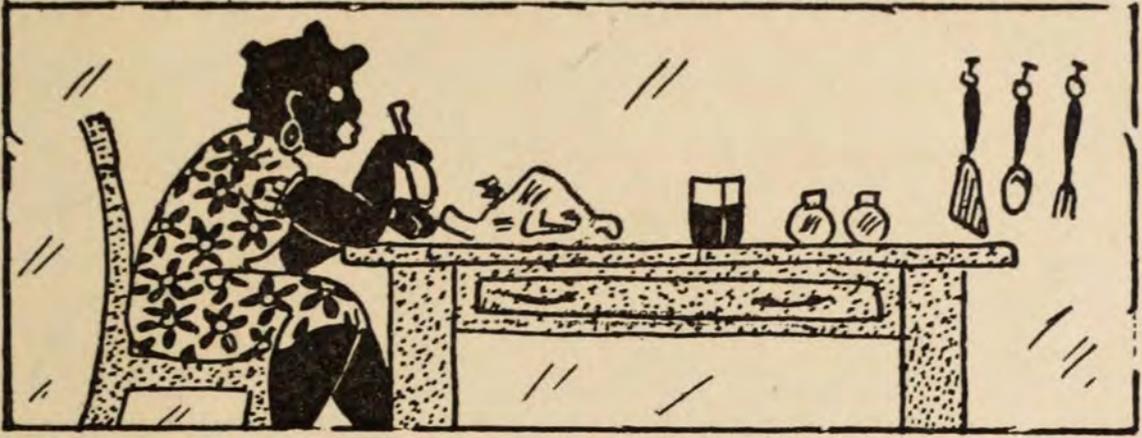


GENEROSITY

Sybus, a colored laborer, was walking from Cristobal to Gatun on the "track-side"; using the railroad ties in lieu of the chiva fare he had lost in a crap game in town.

On the way he met up with a huge and very unfriendly looking snake which immediately coiled itself up and prepared to strike. Sybus stopped in his tracks, his scalp prickling and his flesh rising in goose pimples.

"All right, snaike," he said backing cautiously as the reptile tightened his coils. "You jus' go on and mak yo'self comfort-able. If'n they's any runnin' be done, ah's goin' do it!" And without any more ado, he started hastily in the direction of Cristobal.



TWO MINDS WITH A SINGLE THOUGHT

It is likely that among His Majesty's loyal West Indian subjects, the "haitches" cause more language mix-ups than any other one syllable that can be named. Left off where the white employer expects them to be used (or put on where they don't belong), according to our pattern of speech, they cause considerable confusion and misunderstanding at times.

One case in point is the story of the Jamaican maid who came to grief because her personal "haitches" and those of her mistress didn't jibe too well.

"Louise, take that cold chicken left over from yesterday, and heat it for lunch today, please," Mrs. Culpepper directed her cook one day.

A little later, when lunch was put on the table,

the chicken was not among the dishes present. After waiting a few moments for it to be served, the lady touched the bell.

"Please bring on the chicken, Louise," she said when the servant appeared.

"But . . . they ain' no chicken, Ma'am," the maid announced blankly.

"Why, didn't you understand you were to heat it for lunch? Didn't you hear me say I wished it heated?" Mrs. Culpepper let a note of exasperation creep into her voice.

"Yes'm, I h'understand," Louise answered, twisting her apron. "You tells me to h'eat it, and I do soh!"

"Well, then, . . . bring it on in," the hostess sat back relievedly at last. Her lunch was all right after all; she had been afraid something had gone wrong, maybe; as it can so easily. Her serenity was short-lived, however.

"But I cawn't bring h'it, Ma'am," it was plain to be seen that the situation was fast getting beyond Louise's control. The white lady must be crazy; no less.

"You tells me to h'eat the chicken for lunch, Ma'am," she said blinking dazedly, "an' that's whut I do. I h'eat it for lunch!"

A thin ray of light began to break through the lady's beclouded comprehension at last.

“Do you mean to tell me you ate that chicken, yourself?” she asked amazedly.

“Why, yes’m,” Louise replied. “You tell me soh. You say to h’eat it, Ma’am, and I do whut you tells me!”

By the turn affairs were taking, Louise, also, began to do a bit of comprehending in a big way. Light was beginning to break through her complete befuddlement at last.

“Oh, Ma’am,” she exclaimed contritely, “did you mean I should hot it?”

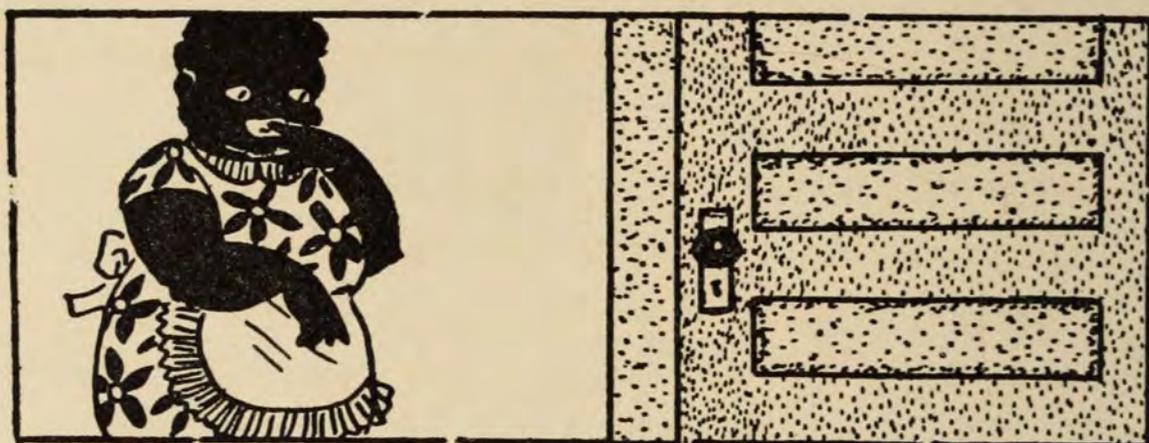
She was given to understand that that was exactly what she had been expected to do—to “hot” it for lunch.

At the end of a confused interval, the family finally settled down to its chicken-less lunch, and Louise went back to her kitchen, muttering as she ambled through the door.

“She doan tell me to *hot* it. She say *h’eat* it, and I do soh! If’n she wan’ me to *hot* it, why’n she say so, ’stead of telling me to *h’eat* it?”

Mrs. Culpepper is particular, since then, to say she wants food “hotted” when she wants it heated. And it works out very well.





THE SECRET ROOM

THE Underhills had a maid who was a great respecter of privacy. All one needed do to insure a quiet and peaceful house at any time of night or day, was to go into a room and close the door. Hetty would thereafter go tip-toeing about, speaking in whispers and admonishing everyone else to be still. There was an unshakable sacredness to her, always, about the mystery of a closed door.

One day Richard, one of the young men of the family, called from his room, where he was dressing to go out, "Hetty, where are the white trousers you ironed for me this morning?"

"I put them in Mr. Howard's room, Sir," she replied. Howard was a younger brother.

"Oh . . . Well, will you get them for me, please?" he called; and heard Hetty trot obediently away.

Howard, meanwhile, had gone into his room and closed the door.

Hetty came tip-toeing back to where Richard, in bathrobe and slippers, was finishing a shave.

"Mr. Richard," she said in a stage whisper, "you'll have to seek your pants yourself. Mr. Howard is privating!"



COLOR SCHEME

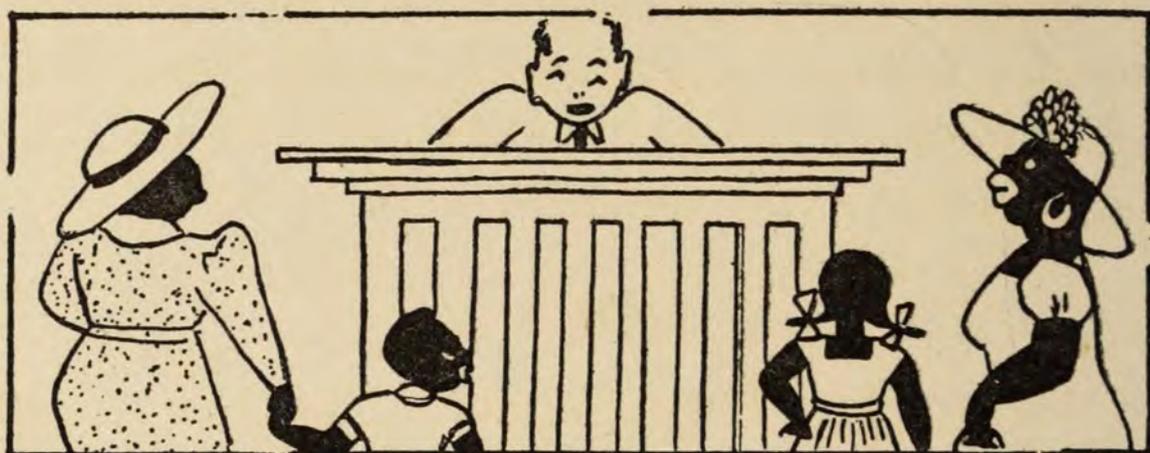
During a dinner party which the Melvilles were giving one evening, the hostess kept wondering what had become of the small beets she had intended as a vegetable.

Her wonderment ceased with the dessert course, however, when Trudy bore a proud bowl of custard to the table. Its lovely frothy meringue top was gaily decorated with lovely little red beets artistically arranged so as to give the very best effect from a decorative angle.

THE BE-CLOUDED ISSUE

"The h'ironing soon done, Mistress," announced Maude with a sigh of relief. "There remain just this one confusion dress to h'iron yet!"

And she reached grimly for the lady's be-ruffled organdie party frock.



FAMILIAR IS AS FAMILIAR DOES

AN irate Red Tank mother appeared in the Balboa Magistrate's Court one day to complain about the nine-year-old son of a neighbor. He had, she averred indignantly, been picking on her twelve-year-old daughter.

The judge soon learned that it was only a juvenile name-calling contest and refused to consider the case. In dismissing it, he lectured the mother briefly for being so quick to take up a cudgel over such a trivial affair. This didn't quell the ruffled matron, however.

"But it don't trivial, Jedge," she insisted. "He was too familiar-like in his speeching!"

"But familiarity is no excuse for going to court," the judge said sternly. "Especially when it is among children."

The lady was nonplussed, but not for long.

“Well . . . he wuz familiar,” she insisted stubbornly; and then added triumphantly, “And you know yourself, Jedge, that old saying about how familiarity breeds content!”



THE UNPARDONABLE SIN

A bitter neighborhood battle entailing considerable pulled hair and damaged epidermis, finally landed the combatants in the magistrate's court. It developed amid a welter of confusion that Gir-linda, scrawny and shrewish mother of six, had callously and with malice aforethought, lacerated the sensitive nature of the buxom Memoria. She had called her the fighting-est name in any Jamaican lady's vocabulary.

“I know I got no children, Jedge,” snorted the aggrieved Memoria, “but that doan give her no right to call me a old mule!” And only the presence of the august judge and six burly policemen restrained her from again tying into a woman what insult a lady so!

LARK ON THE WING

“I sorry, Ma'am” apologized a small ebony caddy new to the game, when he lost a ball in the rough. “I was sky-larking and neglected to observe the pellet when it light out!”



SCALES OF JUSTICE

WITH a rather cautious smirk, it may be opined that the life of a judge on the bench of a Canal Zone magistrate's court, is just one long, sweet assortment of, so to speak, beer and skittles.

Granted: that the august gentlemen in charge of such organizations are more than likely justified in the way they sprout gray hairs over the exasperating vicissitudes of their jobs. Nevertheless, there is no reason why they should not wear a frequent grin beneath the solemn severity which they present to a wrong-doing world . . . and I am sure they do.

A friend who hangs around these justice emporiums in a more or less official capacity, passes on to me, at times, reports of little happenings which should most certainly tend to smooth down a few of the rougher spots in a magistrate's pathway and compensate him for some of the grief

which eternally dogs his footsteps. The following is one of the gems he entrusted to my keeping.

Sambo and Orpheus, two husky colored gentlemen with tempers and clothing in sad disarray, were haled before the bar of justice some little time ago, for fighting. Orpheus, it developed, after a tortuous web of questioning, had hurled a chunk of rock at his adversary, with evil intent.

The rock didn't actually hit Sambo, but it did graze him rather effectively, nicking off a fairly generous section of hide as it whizzed by him at eighty mph.

The curiosity of judges in instances of the sort is insatiable. This case was no exception, and for reasons best known to himself, the magistrate in charge of the proceedings wanted to know just *how* big that rock had been. Orpheus was a gentleman of considerable heft and brawn, and one might reasonably conclude that any missile propelled by him would have a sizable quota of zip back of it.

"Now, Orpheus, I want you to tell me how big that rock was that you threw at Sambo," said the judge, after he had the case buttoned up, at least that far. Orpheus was not the least bit reticent about the matter. Proud, rather.

"Well, Jedge, it was a right good-sized rock!"

he answered with a hint of vast satisfaction in his voice.

"But *how* big?" insisted his interlocutor. "Was it as big as my fist?" And he held up a clenched hand for his prisoner to use as a gauge.

Orpheus looked critically at the fist for a moment and then, with a scornful gleam in his eye, shook his head vigorously.

"Naw, Jedge, it was bigger'n that! It was a whole lot bigger'n that! W'y, I wouldn't waste no time on a little rock that size, Sir yo' Honor!"

The judge pondered a moment and then held out his two fists clenched together. "Was it as big as my two fists?" he demanded.

Orpheus again shook a negative head.

"Jedge," he said decisively, "it was bigger'n that; a *lot* bigger!"

Momentarily the judge was stumped, but being nothing if not persistent, he tried once more.

"Was it as big as my head?" he wanted to know.

Orpheus leaned forward with his head intently on one side as he pursed his lips and earnestly surveyed the august cranium. It was plain that he was struggling valiantly to give a correct answer.

"Well, Jedge," he said finally, "I jus' cain't rightly say for sure. It was sommet that size, but not ezackly. It was about as long as yo' haid, but I don't reely believe it was quite as t'ick!"



LILIES ARE EASILY SMUDGED

A BRIDGE-PLAYING friend has a laundress named Angelina. Huge, black, and complacent, Angelina appears for work on stated days of the week and then vanishes once more into the unknown world wherein dwell the colored people who help us in our homes.

One day Mrs. Phelps wanted some special work done; and as the laundress would not appear again for several days, drove down to the section of town where she lived. After some little time she managed to locate the house where Angelina lived.

The white lady found Angelina's room fairly swarming with progeny. Little chocolate-colored pickaninnies of every age and hue stood in wooly-headed curiosity, looking at their mammy's "White Lady" come to call. Among the brood, Mrs. Phelps noted with amazement one

little white child about two years old . . . evidently a relic of some white man's disregard for the color line. With the singularly fair skin which such little half-castes sometimes have, and its head thickly clustered with little golden curls, it was really a pretty baby; and the visitor commented upon it.

"Is that your baby, Angelina?" she asked.

Without any visible enthusiasm, Angelina admitted, yes, it was.

"Why, what a *pretty* baby!" her mistress exclaimed. When her remark was met with non-committal glumness, she went on, "Don't *you* think that is a pretty baby, Angelina?"

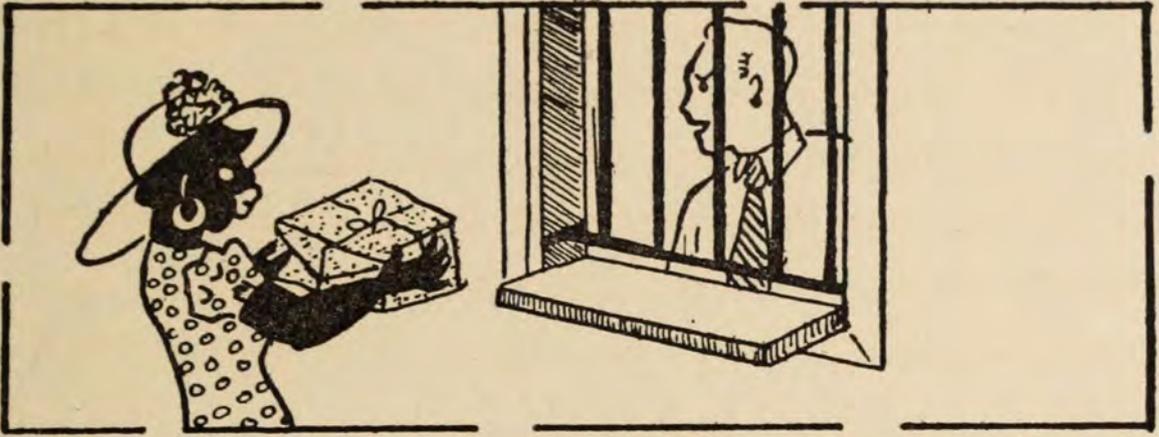
"Yes'm," answered Angelina, but one could tell that her heart was not in her words.

Finally the stolid indifference of her face changed a trifle and she burst out, "Yes'm, he's pretty, all right. But I tells you for true, Miz Phelps, I ain't never goin' to have no more white babies. They shows the dirt too plain!"



THE STRENUOUS LIFE

"I been exertioning until I all tire-out!" exclaimed Tabitha, fanning herself with her apron after a brisk walk up the hill from the commissary.



TINNED GOODS

FROM the Silver Side of a Canal Zone Post Office comes the story of an old colored woman who appeared at the window one day and held out a heavy cardboard package. Questioned as to its contents, she said it was a fruit cake which she wanted to send to her daughter in Jamaica.

“You’ll have to put it in a tin box, though,” the clerk told her. “It would never get there at all, like this.”

The old woman’s wrinkled face drooped with disappointment as she took the rejected package and hobbled painfully away with it.

That afternoon she came back. She had tied her package up in the flimsiest sort of way; not by any means as carefully as it had been wrapped in the morning. The box was of very thin cardboard and there was but one little layer of paper around it, with a single piece of string holding it

together. Yes, it was the same package, she said, . . . the fruit cake to be sent to the daughter in Jamaica.

The clerk looked at it and shook his head with exasperation.

"I told you that it wouldn't go this way," he said with scarcely concealed impatience. "It is too heavy for this kind of box. Didn't you understand that I said a *tin* box?"

The old face brightened a shade, but it was plain that she was completely bewildered by the turn affairs were taking.

"Yes, suh," she said. "I hears you said a t'in box, and tha's whut I got . . . a t'in box!"

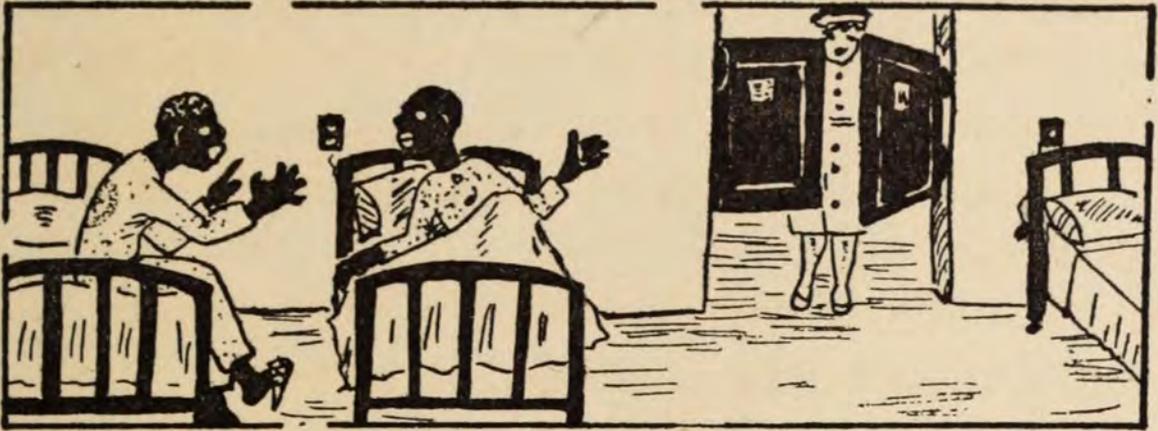
"But this is no tin box," he said, squashing the package with his fingers.

The old woman's face crinkled into a toothless grin. Everything was all right now. She finally had things where she could straighten them out. "Oh, yes, suh," she said eagerly. "I hears you said a t'in box, so I went out and hunt ontwel I fine one. And here 'tis. It is the t'innest box I could fine anywheres!"



CAN'T MAKE AN OMLET WITHOUT

You cyan't make a sancocho widout chop-up a few yams!



CHERCHEZ LA FEMME

A NURSE on the colored men's ward heard Sam and Joe discussing the shortcomings of the Spanish people one day. As a rule there is little love lost between the Jamaican and Spanish elements of the country, and both Joe and Sam were running vociferously true to form. Their opinions of these people were harmoniously unanimous.

"Them is no good, I tell you, mon!" averred Sam vehemently. "Ah doan like they. Them don't trustworthy and um very bad about tiefing! And they too lazy for working on de job. All time want fiesta. No, mon, I has posolutely no use for they!"

Joe agreed vigorously. "Me, neither!" he said emphatically. "They is no account, for true, mon! Very false in de heart. Make believe friendly and all time do you bad. Me, I doan like them

a-tall, a-tall, and I has strickly nothing to do with they. Not nothing!"

After a moment or so, he added as an after-thought of honesty, and in the interests of fair play, "Especialy de men!"



THE MIDDLE WAY

Rhoda was instructing her twelve-year-old daughter in the intricate art of hanging out clothes.

"When de sheet is shuck out—soh," she said, suiting the action to the words, "you hang it up and den straddle de aige wid de clothespin—lak soh!"

FROM THE BIBLE BELT

Blessed be de meek in spirit, for dey shall inherit whatever it is nobody else want!

BIGGEST DUCK IN THE PUDDLE

He konsiders heself de biggest tick on de dog!

IN THE COCK PIT

To de victor belong de loudest crowing!

FRIENDLY ZEPHYRS

It's an ill wind dat blow no coconuts from de tree.

FISHES AND LOAVES

Tillie informed her new mistress on the morning of her arrival, that she was a devout church-go-er, and certain concessions would have to be made so that she could attend early mass when necessary. The matter was easily and satisfactorily arranged.

“Does you-all observe Friday in the cooking?” she wanted to know, further, as they were completing their little maid-mistress pact.

“No, not especially,” replied the lady of the house, “but you may do so if you wish, of course. I presume you prefer fish, then?”

“Yes’m, I does!” replied Tillie firmly.

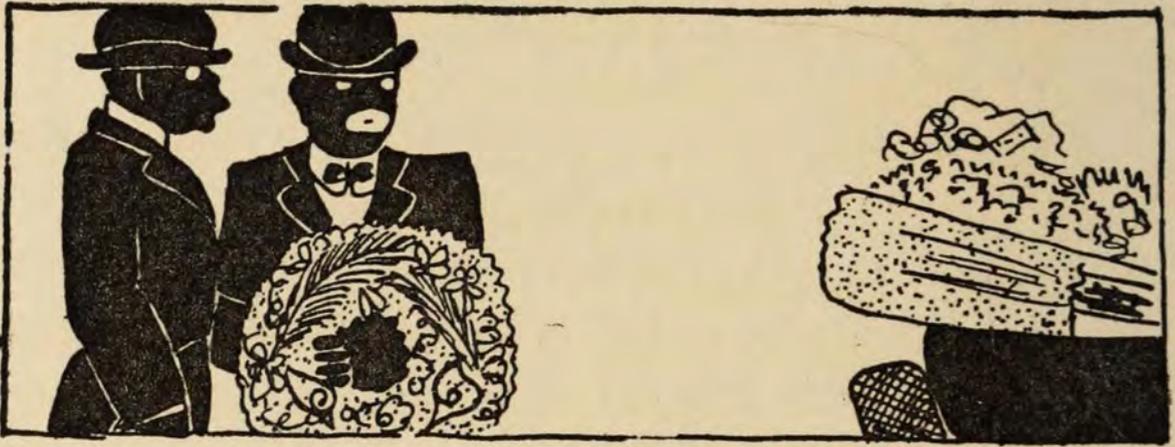
“Well, you may have anything you like; just tell the order man what you want,” was the amiable reply.

Tillie was instantly alert. “I kin have any kind I wants?” she asked, half un-believingly.

“Why, yes, certainly,” was the amused answer. “It doesn’t make any difference to me what kind of fish you eat!”

Tillie gave an ecstatic sigh.

“All right, Ma’am,” she said, beaming with satisfaction. “If’n I kin have what I wants, then I’d like some them little Vienna sausages, if you please’m!”



THE DEPARTED BROTHER

THE West Indian Society of Benevolence and Faith had an account at a down-town bank; funds from which could be withdrawn only when the order was signed by the president and four directors of the organization.

One day the secretary presented a funeral check signed by the four directors only. The president's signature was missing, and, as the teller refused to honor the check, the jefe of the bank was called. He upheld the cashier's decision not to pay out funds without the five required signatures.

"But, suh, I mus' have the money!" the perspiring secretary said desperately. "We got to bury a dead and we gotta have the funds!"

"Well, just get the president's signature, also, and it will be all right," was the calmly soothing

reply. "Go and have him sign this order, too, and we'll pay the money right over to you."

"But I can't get his signature," was the worried answer. "An' we gotta bury that dead today. I mus' have the money!"

The argument went on for all of ten minutes; the bank official insisting upon the missing signature and the frantic secretary declaring that he couldn't get it, but that he simply *had* to have the money.

Finally the impatient official said, "Well, just *why* can't you get the president's signature?"

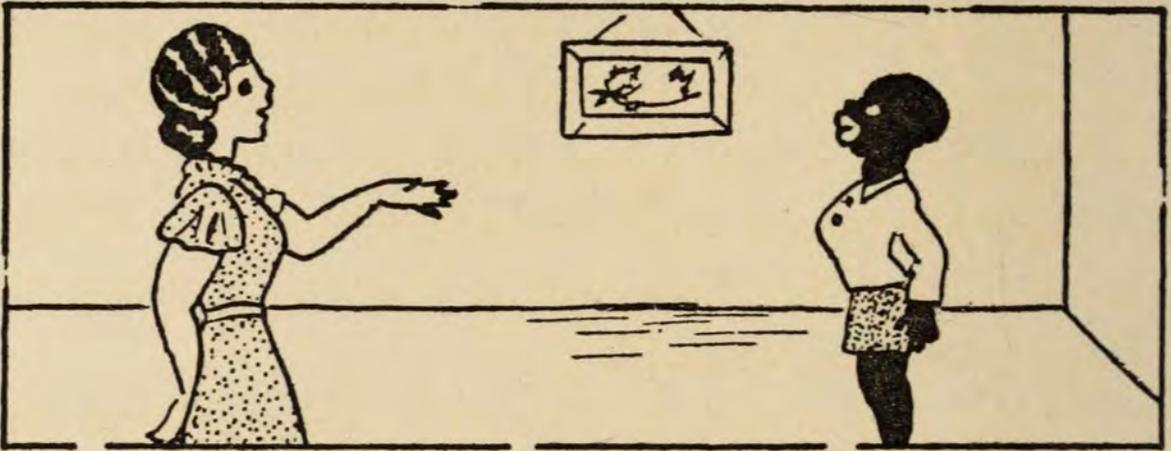
"Oh, because he's the dead!" was the reply, given with the air of one who had just thought of that explanation of the snag he had run up against with this obdurate white man.



NATURE'S BOUNTY

The Ashleys came into the kitchen laden with fruits from the market. Mrs. Ashley carried a papaya, a pineapple, and several hands of bananas. Her husband had a cocoanut or so, some mangoes, and a basket of oranges, limes, and grapefruit.

"My, my!" exclaimed the beaming Trudy as she hastened to relieve them of their parcels. "This sho' is one fruitarian kitchen this day!"



THE HEAPING MEASURE

MRS. LORIMER had a little Jamaican house boy who was bitten by the bug of ambition. He wanted to belong to the "Recruits," an organization which marched abroad on special occasions garbed in perfectly splendiferous uniforms.

He confided this breath-taking ambition to his lady, but she was dubious about his qualifications; was afraid his stature would not fulfill the requirements of a certain height necessary for membership.

"Benny," she said doubtfully, "I am afraid maybe you are a little too short to get in. You may have to wait until you are taller."

Benny's face wore a stricken look, but his heart was strong. He was determined to make a try for it.

"Well, you mustn't be too badly disappointed

if you are turned down," she warned him; hoping to prepare him for probable disappointment.

Benny departed a few days later in a blaze of mingled determination and apprehension. When he returned, his face was a glistening moon of happiness and triumph.

"Did you make it, Benny?" his mistress inquired, knowing without being told that, of course, he had.

"Oh, yes'm," Benny told her breathlessly. "Yes MA'AM! Why, Miz Lorimer, ah'm two whole inches over what I can't be under!"



CHECK AND DOUBLE-CHECK

The Canal's system of checking and double-checking cargoes, was explained clearly by Toby, a Cristobal dockwatchman, to a passing brother.

"Why does them have two checkers to do a one-mon job?" the visitor wanted to know.

"Tha's easy, mon; tha's easy!" Toby replied. "De fust mon, he checks to show dat de cargo is dere. De second mon, he checks to prove dat de cargo don't dere!"

TIME'S FLEETING WING

De watched kittle take a long tyme to bile de yucca.



TRAPPED

LARKIN, big husky West Indian, with a worried look on his ebony countenance, stalked determinedly into a Gringo lawyer's office down town.

"I wants to get me a divorce!" he announced grimly.

"How long have you been living with your wife, Larkin? About fourteen years, did you say?" the lawyer inquired.

"Eighteen, Suh!" Larkin corrected him quickly.

"Are you married to her?" was the next inquiry.

"No, Suh!" came the explosively emphatic denial.

The lawyer smiled a little. "Well, then you can't get a divorce, Larkin," he said. "Don't you know that you can't get a divorce when you aren't married?"

Larkin's big body sagged visibly with disappointed consternation.

"Do that mean," he wailed with a despairing catch in his voice, "that I got to go on living with that 'oman, jest 'cause I ain't married to her?"



ELABORATELY ROMANTICAL

BACKUS, a colored Zone policeman, was establishing an account at the Canadian Bank; a joint account for himself and a lady.

“Is she your wife?” asked the bank official, busily scribbling.

“Oh, yes, suh!” replied Backus with a proud smile.

“Are you married?” queried the banker, preparing to fill in another blank.

“Oh, no, suh,” was the smugly complacent reply. “She is just mah elaborate girl friend!”

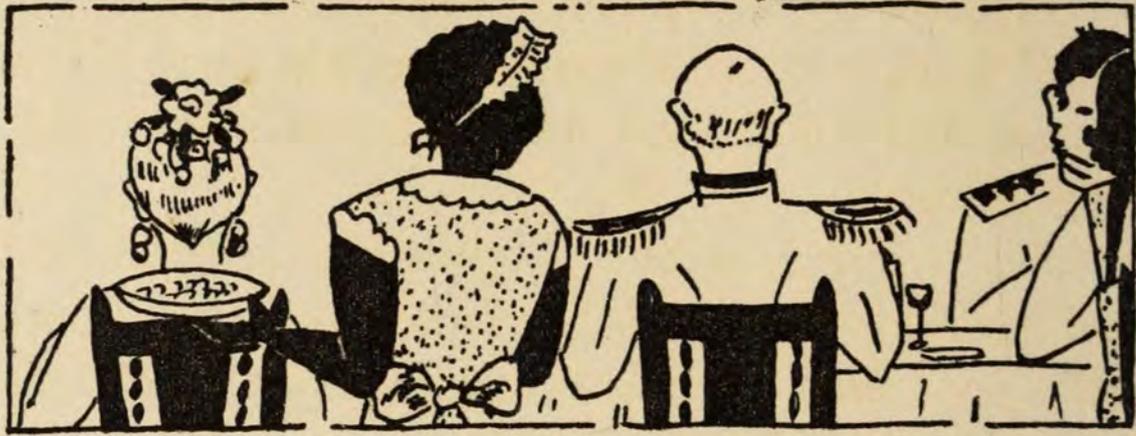


CHORILLO PHILOSOPHY

De burnt cheild shuns de charcoal pot!

SMALL PEOPLE—SWELLED HEADS

It doan tek much to make a tick swell-up!



ISTHMIAN THEME SONG

RUTH ELLA, a maid from Quarry Heights, was plodding wearily homeward when she met up with a colleague who worked for a family in Balboa. They stopped to chat near the screened porch of an Ancon lady who became highly interested in their conversation.

“You hev big dinner party at yo’ folks’ house last night, didn’t yo’?” asked the friend with a tiny flicker of envy in her voice.

“Yes’n’deedy!” said the Army maid smugly. “An’ sho’ wuz one swell party, too. The gov’nor and his laidy wuz there, and a ambassador and some gin’rals and adm’rls and other fine laidies and gent’men. Lots of fine peoples and um all dress-up so well. . . . Ummmm!”

The other maid sighed a little. She was employed in a modest home where the work was easier, albeit not so glamorous.

“My! I’ll bet there wuz lots nice conversationin’ to listen at, with all them fine people there?” she commented wistfully. Ruth Ella made no reply, only grunted.

“Jus’ whut does fine peoples like gin’rals and adm’rals and all them other ladies and gent’muns talk about when them gits together like that?” she wanted to know.

Ruth Ella’s reply was laconic, but all-revealing as to one of the favorite topics of Isthmian after-dinner chit-chat. What do the fine peoples of the Isthmus talk about when them gits together at dinner parties?

“Us!” she said briefly.



FORTUNE OF THE HIGHWAY

De run-after chiva always travel de fastest!

OUT OF THE ETHER

De radyo, him a wonderful contraptshon, Mon!
Him sing without visible contack!







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LATIN
AMERICA



A series of small, illegible scribbles and marks along the bottom edge of the page, possibly representing a signature or a series of small drawings.

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