THE NEGRO DIALECT.

Some Comments on Paul Laurence Dunbar's Efforts to Sustain It.

"As a rule the negro who has grown out of the dialect of his race makes an extremely poor showing in an effort to mimic the negro's talk," said an observant man, "and his efforts to write it are even more pronounced failures. But Paul Laurence Dunbar, the negro poet, has written at least one thing in which he sustained the dialect of his race. In the 'Death Song' Dunbar got closer to the talk and the nature of the negro than in any other effort. It is worth recalling, so here it is:

"Lay me down beneaf de willers in de grass,
Whah de branch 'll go a-singin' as it pass.
An' w'en I's a-layin' low
I kin hyeah it as it go
Singin', 'Sleep, my honey, tek yo' res' at las'.'

"Lay me nigh to whah hit meks a little pool,
An' de watah stan's so quiet lak an' cool,
Whah de little birds in spring
Use to come an' drink an' sing,
An' the chillen waded on dey way to school.

"Let me settle w'en my shouldahs drape dey load
Nigh enough to hyeah de noises in de road,
Fu' I t'ink de las' long res'
Gwine to soothe my sperrit bes'
Ef I's layin' 'mong de things I's allus knowed.

"You will observe here that he shows the negro's strong devotion to the 'I,' and it is interesting because of the tendency on the part of writers of negro dialect to force the 'I' out by the substitution of 'a.' Dunbar's use of 'I's' for the improper 'I is' is genuine. Most negro dialect writers of today would write it 'Ah's,' for they nearly always use 'Ah' for 'I.' So he shows the same preference for 'I' in the lines—

"An' w'en I's a-layin' low
I kin hyeah it as it go
Singin', 'Sleep, my honey, tek yo' res' at las'.'

"Here we have 'I's' and 'I kin,' both showing the negro's devotion to the sound of 'I.' So he uses 'gwine' for 'going,' probably errs in the distinctive 'gwin to,' for the negro, as a rule, will make one word out of the phrase, giving it more the sound of 'gwinter.' But, on the whole, the dialect is good and is well sustained."—New Orleans Times-Democrat.

An Interrupted Soliloquy

By KEITH GORDON

"Ugh!" breathed Louise Rainor in disgust as she rubbed away viciously at the glove on her shapely hand. "How I loathe and despise poverty! I actually believe I shed the odor of gasoline just as Madge Carr does the odor of violets!"

"Economy! Economy! Economy!" she continued, punctuating her words with a pull at the fingers of the glove which she was now fastening upon a line where several others dangled in pathetic helplessness. "How I hate the word!"

Talking to oneself has always the advantage of affording relief to pent-up feelings without encountering opposition. So it may have been as much on account of the explosive quality of her thoughts as of the fluid she was using that Louise had selected the far end of the back lawn for her operations that morning.

The fence was high and almost concealed by a network of spring greenery. For a moment the girl forgot herself, lost in admiration of the scene about her—the great old trees under which three generations of Rainors had played and the velvety sward upon which a robin was hopping about in a businesslike search for food.

Then she sighed again, two ominous lines appearing on her smooth forehead.

A silk waist was plunged into its gasoline bath with an energy born of rebellion at things as they were.

"If I had a son," she burst out, carried far beyond the proper scope of maidenly meditations by the strength of her feelings, "I'd teach him from his youth up that money was the greatest thing in the world."

She paused in her work and glanced defiantly about. She ached to have somebody hear the shocking sentiment she was voicing, but the only living thing in sight was the robin, and he was intent upon his own affairs.

"I would!" she affirmed, as if her remark had met with protest. "It's all very well to talk about honor and nobility and all that, but the only thing that the world pays any attention to is money.

SHE CALLED SOFTLY, "JACK!"

"Look at the Rainors! They've been honorable men and true for generations, and the result is that mamma and I haven't money enough to get the roof mended and that the last of the name has to clean her gloves and gowns herself or wear them soiled!

"There's that Seymour girl, just as ordinary as she can be! But nobody cares how 'nouveau' the money is, so long as it is there. I wouldn't have thought, though, that Jack"—

Her nostrils quivered and she dabbed away at the waist in her hands ratherly blindly. During the period of silence that followed, the collar of a light silk waist was subjected to a long and exhaustive friction. One would almost have thought that she had forgotten where she was and what she was doing from the automatic way in which she worked and the unseeing expression of her eyes.

"I don't care in the least"—her voice was really beautifully cool and indifferent—"but it's painful to see people toady so to money—people at least that you care—that is, that you've known a long time.

"She's the very type of a girl that I've heard him laugh at a hundred times, but just the same he danced with her three times at the Willoughbys', was out riding with her yesterday and is probably decorating that gaudy veranda of theirs at this moment."

A careful examination of the waist as she pinned it on the line beside the gloves absorbed her for the next few minutes. Whatever a Rainor did had of necessity to be well done, and no professional cleaner could have eyed his work more critically and minutely than she did hers.

"I suppose the glitter of the millions she will have dazzles him!" she observed scornfully. "Money makes any one fascinating. Too much nonsense has been written about love. Somebody ought to write a great big, stirring epic about money. Properly done, it would make the 'Niebelungen Ring' read like a nursery tale! Don't men and women sell their souls for it?"

Her head went up, and she waited, with a waist suspended dramatically above the gasoline, as if challenging some unseen auditor to contradict her statement.

"I don't blame him a bit!" were her next words, by which the reader will glean that she had made a long stride in tolerance. "I'd do the same thing myself. I'm going to, in fact. Old Mr. Masham's heart and money are mine for the taking, and I'll write him this very morning. What glorious times mamma and I will have when I'm mistress of that fortune—only I wish the poor old man would—

"It doesn't make any difference. I hate poverty, and I'll never marry a poor man. Never!"

Such was her absorption that she failed to notice a tall youth who was coming across the lawn toward her. Seeing that he was unobserved, he came up behind her softly, just in time to catch her vehement declaration. His face reddened, and the surprise that he planned seemed suddenly unadvisable.

"Nobody asked you to, miss, he said," was his mocking retort. And Louise turned toward him with a start. "Odd habit of yours—talking to yourself," he added, somewhat sourly.

"It lightens one's domestic duties," was the lofty rejoinder. "Why didn't Miss Seymour run over with you?" she continued sweetly. "It would have given her a chance to see how 'the other half lives,' you know!"

"Hang Miss Seymour!" crossly.

"From the way you've been dancing attendance upon her"—

Lifted brows and a shrug completed the sentence, but it was apparent that Miss Rainor was highly scandalized. Then she became serious and sisterly.

"Really, Jack, you ought to think about the future—about posterity, you know. Think how important money is and what a golden opportunity you have!"

As she spoke his face became more and more gloomy. Strangely enough, her spirits seemed to rise as his sank.

"Hang posterity!" he growled.

"Mercy, what a vision you call up! Nothing but gibbets and dangling figures as far as the eye can see!" she laughed merrily. "But, seriously, you ought to think of my advice. Money is a very important thing."

There was a brief silence, during which he glared at her in moody indignation.

"Has old Masham spoken?" he asked at last with biting sarcasm. "Oh, I have sense enough to see that I'm not wanted here," he continued without waiting for a reply. "I came to tell you something, but it scarcely seems worth while. I was answered before I had a chance to ask."

He jumped up and started off across the lawn with great strides. The girl watched him with wicked, exultant delight. Suddenly a swift change came over her face, and she called softly, "Jack!"

He turned and regarded her uncertainly, while she looked hurt and amazed. Then he slowly retraced his steps.

"I fancied you had something to tell me," she observed innocently.

"It wouldn't be worth while. You see, I am a poor man."

She clasped her hands behind her and looked him over speculatively, then she shook her head.

"No, I don't call you a poor man. You're big and strong and rather nice. Besides, you have the kind of blue eyes that I like"—

She stopped for a moment, and then she finished softly:

"Old Mr. Masham is my idea of a poor man."

The "Born Fixer" at Work.

"Our clock stopped the other day," said a woman. "When I wound it the pendulum refused to swing. William told me to let it alone until he had time to fix it.

"One evening after dinner William took down the clock. He told the servant to bring him the kerosene oil can. He poured half the contents of the can down the back of the clock. Incidentally he ruined the tablecloth and his trousers. But I didn't mind that. It never pays to interfere with a born fixer when he's fixing something.

"After William had tinkered with the timepiece for an hour he decided to wait until the next night. When he had gone downtown next morning I took it to a clockmaker.

"'Jimminy,' he exclaimed, 'who's been monkeying with this? To remedy the original trouble would have cost you 40 cents. Now you'll want a new face, since this one is soaked with oil. You're in for $4.50 all right.'

"I had the clock in its usual place when William came home to dinner. But he never seemed to notice it. Said he was going to a neighbor's that evening to help him fix his automobile."—New York Press.

Even Worse.

Mrs. Hoyle—I hear that your husband died intestate. Mrs. Doyle—Well, I don't know what his trouble was, but he had to have an operation.—Town Topics.

Malice eats up the greatest part of her own venom and therewith poisoneth herself.—Montaigne

Civil Service in the Kitchen.

"Maria," said Boggles to his wife, with an idea of instructing her in political economy, "do you know what civil service is?"

"Jasper," said Mrs. Boggles, with memory of recent contact with the cook, "there isn't any."—Chicago Journal.