

Mamba's Daughters

(Continued from Page Six)

aristocracy—overseers—poor-whites—and, of course, traders. . . . Saint—how distinguished he is looking now—so like his father—a Wentworth Silly of me to sit here crying when I'm so happy—when the fight is all over—when my children have won. . . . What a sensitive profile he has—a thoroughbred—a success—a manager of the St. Cecilia Society—youngest on the board. . . . Valerie—a fitting mate for my boy—lovely now with that smile on her lips—living in the memory of the music, no doubt—well, she's of the new generation, perhaps she gets more out of it than I do. . . . A good mother to my boy's son—a good daughter to me. . . . Shall I go behind the scenes with Saint afterward? Shall I take Valerie instead right after the curtain and leave him to follow? . . . These new Negroes—so different—wouldn't understand who I am—something awkward might happen—expect to be addressed as Mr. and Mrs., no doubt—No, I couldn't manage that. . . . Now, Lissa, she would understand with her Southern raising. . . . But the others! No, it would not be wise to stay. Saint can wait if he wants to and join us later. It is different, less complicated, with a man."

And on Wentworth's left, with the smooth ivory of her shoulder brush-

ing his broadcloth sleeve, sits Valerie, lost in her own reverie. "The boy," she is wondering. "Is Miss Jones taking proper care of him? He's such a restless sleeper—needs watching; he's so absurdly like Saint. It is good to know that once, at an important turning, you thought straight, acted for the best, threw your weight on the right side. . . . Good to know that your child will have every comfort—every chance—that your husband is happy—respected—successful. . . . Lissa! What a strange upside-down piece the world is. . . . Mamba! That night when she took Saint and me to her church. . . . I knew then that I had to have him. . . . Funny old thing, Mamba—knew my heart before I did—wanted to help us along. . . . The wedding. . . . The boy! Is he missing me? Wish I knew more about Miss Jones—still she was well recommended—looker—competent. . . . Will he sing, I wonder, or paint—or write?—It means so much to his father. . . . But I'm not so sure. . . . Dad's failure! Yes, but money makes such a difference—gives talent its chance. We're secure now—Saint—the boy."

Slowly the light in the big auditorium commenced to ebb, dimming the modern decorations and endowing them with a mysterious beauty, then plunging the audience into interstel-

lar night. The slow throb of music filled the dark, then the curtain of the final act drew up on a stage of swirling mists and vague half-lights. Instantly the mood of the play was re-established, fixing the watchers in attitudes of rigid expectancy.

Dawn again, but no longer the red of an old despair. A thin, essential radiance breathed upward behind the massed towers of a metropolis. It gathered strength, spraying out like the corona of an aurora, gilding the towers, then dominating them. The music caught the mood of the sky. The arresting dissonances, the sharp syncopations of the early acts, were no longer individually evident but seemed to merge into a broader, irresistible current of sound. The rhythm, too, was no longer a thing separate. It became a force as indistinguishable and pervasive as the life current. It was a fundamental law that moved light, music, the sway of the crowd, the passage of time, in a concerted and inevitable progression. The artificial declamations of operatic convention were gone. The cast was reduced to two elemental forces. The crowd with its heavy massed rhythms and reiterated choruses was the body, and the single transcendent mezzo-soprano that soared above it was the spirit, aspiring, daring, despairing, lifting again. The movement became faster. The voice com-

menced to lift the chorus from its inertia and carry it along on short, daring flights. Then, in a final acceleration, the scene soared toward its tremendous climax. The light, the movement, the music, merged into a sweeping crescendo, the chorus sprang from its lethargy, while the voice of the woman climbed triumphantly above it until it shook the

al. like a storm of beating wings. Then the curtain shot downward.

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BOOK TALK

African Bedtime Stories

LITTLE BLACK STORIES FOR LITTLE WHITE CHILDREN, by Blaise Cendrars, PAYSON and CLARK, Ltd., \$2.00.

In so far as the title of this book states that its stories are for "little white children" it is a misnomer. There is interest on its pages for little black as well as for little white children. Indeed, the youthful spirits of all races, regardless of color will find the simple and naive humor of these stories a delight.

Among this collection will be found, why no one ever carries the alligator down to the water. The gift of swiftness and other tales that are written in a charming style and which intrigue even the adult reader by their engaging simplicity.

In the dedication, the author calls the tales "Stories which the big children of Africa tell around the fire at night to amuse themselves and to keep watch against the beasts who roam."

It is difficult to understand what interpretation the author intends to

put upon "children" as used in the foregoing sentence. If he uses the word in the sense that all Africans are of child-like mentality, then he needs to become acquainted with the history of such brilliant African strategists as Tippe Tib and Moshesh. The genius of these two black men baffled and humbled Europe's finest military expeditions. To these men this volume would appear as the Uncle Remus stories appear to Einstein.

As a matter of fact, there is no earmark in this group of stories which distinguishes them from the commonly known type of fable, made famous by Aesop and in modern times by Uncle Remus. If there is a distinction to be made it must be based on the unusual excellence of Mr. Cendrars' collection of stories. The volume was written for juvenile readers but one ventures to say that the juveniles had best keep their copies carefully concealed from sophisticated adults.

Modernistic illustrations by a prominent French artist add to the distinctiveness of the volume.

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