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## REVIEWS.

The Black Border. By AMBROSE E. GONZALES. Columbia, S.C., 1922.

THE stories of this "Black Border," which is the coast and islands of South Carolina and Georgia, are stories, not by the folk, but about them, and are not entirely interesting to the folk-lorist, unless the literary setting which is determined by the white Southern point of view is taken itself as folk-lore. The attitude of the writer towards the Negro dialect that he has recorded, it is to be said, with considerable care, can hardly be taken in any other way. For example, after drawing attention to certain vowel-sounds, he tells us that "in no other tongue, perhaps, can so much be expressed with so little strain upon brain or lips or glottis as by the Gullah's laconic use of these grunting jungle-sounds," — for the student of phonetics, a rather diverting reference to the subtle sounds and tones of the languages of Africa.

In a primer by two students of African phonetics — Daniel Jones of the University of London, and Solomon Tshekisho Plaatje of Kimberley — occurs this maxim: "Don't imagine that a difficult language can be turned into an easy one if you only clothe it in an inaccurate but familiar-looking orthography." May not this apply to the writing of dialect as well as of mother-tongue — to "Gullah" as well, say, as to Sechuana? It requires special training to write languages according to a rigid phonetic system; and, when so written, they are a sealed book to the general reader. In this country it has become a tradition to write Negro dialect according to an orthography which is neither phonetic nor conventional, but a mixture of the two stirred by the whim of the writer. As the task of writing dialect phonetically, with the Queen's English involved, is not to be undertaken single-handedly, would it not be well to agree to keep as closely to conventional orthography as possible, expressing the elisions, which bulk large in Negro dialect, by apostrophes, and changing letters only when actually there is a difference in pronunciation? To take instances from the Gullah glossary given as an appendix in "The Black Border," why not write "dange'ous" instead of "dainjus," "chil'" instead of "chile," or, "bery well den" instead of "berrywellden"? and why write "cundemn" for "condemn," "fast'n" for "fasten," "i'on" for "iron," "gonnil" for "gunwale," "pawpus" for "porpoise," "nuf" for "nough"? Is this proneness to out-dialect dialect associated in any way, one wonders, with such practices as referring to Negroes as "darkies" or of classifying by indirection through using the term "educated Negro" where, in equivalent circumstance, the term "educated white" would not be used? Such verbal habits will have to receive attention from the psychologists when the psychologists undertake a serious study of the feeling of cultural superiority.

But, besides orthographic oddities and cultural self-assertiveness, there have strayed into Mr. Gonzales' Gullah glossary bits of interesting Negro-lore. Small frogs are called "fry-bakin frogs" from their call, "Fry-bacon,

tea-table! fry-bacon, tea-table!" "grin' salt" (grinding salt) is said of a circling hawk or vulture; "sweet-mout' talk" is that of a philanderer; "long mout'" describes the surly or contemptuous pushing-out of the lips of an angry or discontented person; "long talk ketch run'way nigguh" means that talk by the roadside caused runaway slaves to be caught by the "patrol;" "plat-eye" is the name of an apparition common to the Georgetown section of the coast; and so on.

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