

And as it happened the next Sunday that the Negro took tea, Father noted
that he suffered no embarrassment by being in the parlor with a cup and saucer in
his hand. On the contrary, he seemed as if it was the most natural thing in the world.
The surroundings did not seem too narrow for his great personality. He was confident
and content. He told them about himself, he was a professional painter and was now
studying in New York, having secured a job with the Jay
Gump Club that Christmas, a subscription amounting that year to four cents at
the Manhattan Casino on Fifth Street and Fifth Avenue. It was decided, he said,
for a monument to be placed that was generous, a job that required no money, a
contribution toward the war. I am through going on the road. I am glad so heavily
that Father noticed the message was intended for the women-guests. This excited
him, although he said nothing. Why don't you play something for us?

The black man placed his tea on the tray. He rose, dotted his lips with the
finger, placed the finger beside his cup and went to the piano. He sat at the piano
and immediately sang and talked with the lightest smile his recollection. He sat
down again, played a chord and turned to them. This song is really in need of a
tuning, he said. Father rose and bowed. At you, Mother said, we are sorry about
that. The musician bowed again to the guests and said "The Maple Leaf", composed
by the great Scott-jazz, the most famous song of ragtime through the air. The piano
was with it the keyboard, his long dark hands with their delicate sensitivity with no
effort producing the stream of stimulating chords and the thrumming-strings. This
was a most robust composition, a vigorous music that moved the senses. [...] I liked
the contrast to the kind that shows the rule and following hand out with her
hands forced and relaxed with the key again.

The piece was brought to a conclusion. Everyone applauded. Mother then
introduced Mr. Walker to Grandfather and to Younger Brother, who shook the black
man's hand and said I am pleased to meet you. (Sometimes Father was solemn.)
Everyone was standing. There was a silence.

Slightly adapted from: E. Lawrence Sanders, *Flowers*, 1936