What Una had to say

UNA MARSON'S abundant creativity gave expression to literary and dramatic life in Jamaica. She had an unassuming courage. I met her, more years ago than I care to remember, when she edited Cosmopolitan, the first magazine owned by a Jamaican woman.

At that time, too, Una founded The Readers and Writers Club. There I met the Hill brothers, H. V., Jacob, O. T. Fairclough, Elsie Benjamin Barrow, Noel Vault, Mike Campbell. Each in some way or other, gave vitality to Jamaica. Among the club's members was the late H. G. de Lusser, almost legendary author and editor of the Daily Gleaner. That Una Marson secured the membership of an astute, proud man shows how mightily were her powers of persuasion. She was a dynamo of the Poetry League.

Una contended and proved before anyone else that neither writing, nor acting, could be profitable and acceptable to the Jamaican public unless real-life, contemporary situations and words were employed. She produced plays and founded a publishing house to put into effect those theories. Today, they are commonplace.

Una introduced me to Kingston, her city of adoption. She made it mine too. She gave me counsel and criticism. Una was the liveliest of critics. Nothing, no one, escaped her humorous perception, not excluding herself. Recently she inquired: "What do you think of this dress?—Too young and bright for me?"

Reflecting quickly that Una possessed honesty, I said gently: "Well yes, it's a bit gay."

"I'm so glad!" enthused Una. "That's how I feel—bright and colourful!"

By AIMEE WEBSTER

The Blues of a Jamaican Lady

THE POOR— that cause which engages the sympathies of many—Una never judged as an ever-hungry mouth which endless money, food, cast-off clothing must be poured. Una judged all by the capacity of the individual to do to perform. Thus, after she

The blues of a Jamaican Lady

Without care for critics
Nor recom the music:
She sang the blues of a Jamaican lady.

Bird in a parsonage
Careful of her manners, yet poor,
She told of an ancient ache
Of love and loss and woe,
The blues of a Jamaican lady.

Once in a moon spring
She wrote of the heart's ambush
As called, Garvey's Europe,
Old and cold, feeding on its dead;
Yet glimpsed a glint
And searched and finding none
Distilled in phrases
Love as elusive as its sun.

And she not rest enough,
She asked, to satisfy the years
In the stillness, memory,
Darts like golden fish
In the transluence of yesterdays
Under the sea. Now she has done.

We put her decently under the earth:
Playwright, distinguished
Social worker, journalist,
And poet, I insist, poetess.
If you wish, above all poet,
She sang the blues of a Jamaican lady.

Sylvia Wynter

SUNDAE GLEANER, 9 May 1965