

1.

My journey began in Trinidad, ~~the southernmost of the West Indian islands~~ Trinidad is only 7 miles from the Latin American mainland, and one can stand on a hill and watch the coast of what was the Spanish Main in the days of pirate Captain Henry Morgan but is today the state of Venezuela. Trinidad is also the beginning of that 2,000-mile long curving chain of islands/ ^{known as the West Indies} that ends way up near the coast of Florida, the southernmost coastal tip of the United States.

It is the second largest of the British West Indian islands - second only to Jamaica./ It is squarish in shape, has a population of 645,300, and an area of 1,860 square miles/(just slightly smaller than Lancashire).

I soon discovered that the general belief here in Britain that all the British West Indian islands are poor does not hold good for Trinidad. It is not a poor island: it is the richest and most prosperous of all the British islands. This prosperity is clearly seen in the buildings of Port-of-Spain, the capital. There is a general air of prosperity among the middleclasses. New and costly houses are going up on the sunny hills above the capital. Land values are soaring. £60 a month rent for a decent sized house is not considered terribly high. I know of one British civil servant who pays out the bulk of his salary in rent.

In 1939 the Trinidad Government's total Revenue was 13,421,444 British West Indian dollars: by 1952 this had shot up to 66,785,400 dollars. (The B.W.I. dollar is worth 4/2d). There has been the same rocketing of Government spending. In 1939 the Government had an accumulated surplus of 9,154,627 dollars: by 1952 this was 38,931,360 dollars.

Oil is the basis of Trinidad's prosperity. There are a dozen oil companies operating in the island today. These companies have banded themselves together into the Petroleum Association of Trinidad. I called on the offices of the

Association to find out just what all this prosperity meant to the Trinidad worker. The Public Relations man was not at all cagey. He brought out all his books and figures and seemed anxious to give me even more than I wanted. He showed that the total Government Revenue in 1954 was 73,634,818 dollars and that his members, the oil industry, contributed 25,004,639 dollars towards that total. Oil had in fact contributed 34% of the total Government income for the year 1954. But I wasn't satisfied. What about the workers? The lowest paid workers got 52 cents an hour. This meant a minimum of 4.16 dollars for an 8-hour day - about 17/- a day. The oil industry employed upwards of 16,000 workers.

I had a look at some of the other industries to check on wages. I found that Sugar the second most important, employed roughly 20,400 workers during the peak crop season which runs from January to June. During the out of crop season this figure drops to about 16,000. Cane cutters who, unionists told me, rarely worked more than three months in each year, averaged between 5-6 dollars a day. There are no unemployment benefits and how these seasonal labourers live between one crop period and the next, not only in Trinidad but in all the other islands as well, is a mystery. A prominent trade unionist told me: "Theoretically thousands of seasonal workers should die every year. The mystery and the miracle is that they don't."

Other agricultural workers average 2 dollars a day. Building workers are regarded as casual labourers and earn 2.40 dollars a day. Commercial workers also earn that amount. Government labourers get 2.23 dollars daily. And the dock workers, among the best organised, and only 2,000 strong, get 4.36 dollars daily. There are no accurate figures but the last official estimate of the island's working population (1951) placed at 216,186 of who 14,280 are unemployed. My own estimate would put the present unemployment figure much higher than this. One

I got some idea of how these, the unemployed and seasonally employed, lived when I went a few miles out of Port-of-Spain and saw the shanty shacks and hovels by the wayside. For all the prosperity and sunshine and rich earth that almost seemed to sprout food when you spat at it, there were many who lived in dire poverty. The gap between those who have and those who have-not is terribly wide.

When I turned to look at the political picture I soon ran up against Trinidad's most serious problem, the communal problem. To make sense of it I must sketch in a bit of history here. The island became a British possession in 1797. By then it had a population of 18,000 ~~years~~ of whom over half were of African origin and slaves. After the freeing of the slaves and between 1845 and 1917 over 150,000 immigrants, mainly from India were brought into the island to fill the need for labour on the sugar estates. Today the Indian population number a quarter of a million. It is a rapidly increasing population.

There is hostility, both social and political, between the Indian community on the one hand and the rest of the population. I discussed this with some of the political leaders. They charged that the Indians thought and acted communally, placed the interests of their own community above the welfare of the country. They cited the issue of West Indian Federation as an example.

The Indian leaders are opposed to Federation. Within a broad federal set-up the Indians would be a very small minority. But in a Trinidad outside the Federation they stood a good chance, if not at the next election then at the one after, of winning power at the polls. Certainly, I found when I spoke to representatives of the Indian community that, with rare exceptions, they were opposed to Federation. I also found strong communal feeling at all levels. Communalism could become a very serious problem in this island. It is for this reason that Albert

Gomes, the leader of the Government, is anxious for the West Indian Federation to come into being as soon as possible. His great hope is that the conference due to begin in London on February 7th will be the final one that will bring the Federal State of the British West Indies into being.

One development that might prove significant to the future of Trinidad took place while I was out there. Up to now there has been no clear party system in operation in the island although it has had its present form of elected representatives since 1945. But while I was there Dr. Eric Williams, perhaps the most brilliant scholar so far produced in the British Caribbean, announced his intention of starting a political party that would cut across communal and shade prejudices. From private talks I got the impression that Williams would model his party on the lines of Norman Manley's Peoples National Party of Jamaica.

While I was there Williams was giving a series of public lectures: and these were really lectures, not just political pep talks. And the striking thing was the thousands of people, ordinary people, who came to a public square and listened while a dark little intellectual instructed them quietly on the history, politics, social and economic problems of their island, much as a professor might instruct his class. And they listened and took it in. The orthodox politicians are worried about Williams' impact. They might well be. For if he succeeds Eric Williams might bring something new to the beautiful, rich island of carnivals, calypsos, oil derricks, a pitch lake, sugar factories and the famous steel bands.

#

2.

In the bulky, reliable British West Indian Airways Dakota Barbados is about a couple of hours from Trinidad. Over Trinidad we had flown through massive black clouds that looked threatening. It might have been the beginnings of Hurricane Janet that was to devastate Barbados a fortnight later. Over Barbados the sky was a spotless blue.

For me Barbados was the drabest, the least attractive of the West Indian islands I saw. It is ~~drab~~ flat by contrast to Trinidad. In most other settings it would, doubtless, be a beautiful island but in a sea of remarkably beautiful islands it ^{it} ~~was~~ not, for me at least. It is the oldest of the British possessions in the Caribbean. The first British settlers reached it on February 20th, 1627. The settlers displaced nobody, for there was nobody on the island. Slaves were not imported from Africa until 1636.

Today it is the most 'English' as well as the poorest of the larger West Indian islands. They call it 'Little England' and 'Bimshire'; and it is the only British island in the Caribbean where I saw a man in striped trousers, morning coat and winged collar and rolled umbrella walking in the noonday sun. I also found there more sharply defined 'racial' attitudes than elsewhere in the West Indies. There is a subtle but real colour barrier that is up all the time. On one side are the whites, on the other the coloureds. There is less mixing than on the other islands. People in the other West Indian islands I visited think there is more race prejudice in Barbados than anywhere else in the Caribbean. The race-ridden Bahamas are not considered a part of the Caribbean. From what I saw for my self in Barbados I would endorse the opinion of other West Indians about racial prejudice there. But every now and then I was startled by a

freak breakdown in this pattern of prejudice. For here and there, living mainly among the poorest of the blacks, I came across isolated white individuals to whom no other word but 'degenerated' can be applied. They are poor, drab and, seemingly, without the will to pull themselves together. They seem unable to keep jobs. They are cut off from the other whites. The coloureds despise them and so, generally, do the poor blacks among whom they live. The other whites behave as though they are not there. The easily got rum is their last support. These people are the descendants of those early settlers with small holdings who were squeezed out by the big sugar estate combines in the years immediately after emancipation.

Basically, the island has a one-crop economy: sugar. And to give an idea of the difference in the financial turnover between Barbados and Trinidad, the Barbados Estimates for 1951-52 are: estimated Government income: 10,575,612 B.W.I. dollars; estimated Government expenditure: 10,425,296 dollars. This would leave an estimated surplus of 150,316 dollars. If it is remembered that the West Indian dollar is worth 4/2d then this becomes finance in the region of a very modest business concern. The bald fact is that 'Little England' is a desperately poor island, completely incapable of supporting itself by itself.

The signs of this poverty are to be seen in the backstreets of Bridgetown, the capital and all over the island. Houses are made of packing cases, bits of corrugated iron and sacking; and in one place a short distance from the heart of the capital, I visited an old woman who lived in the broken down body of an old car. It was among these people in their matchbox houses or houses made of bits of tin and sacking tied together that hurricane Janet caused most damage.

The Government of Grantley Adams has made efforts to cope with the housing problem. But there just is not enough money in the colony.

One bright morning I met a gang of about a dozen canefield workers by the roadside 15 miles outside Bridgetown. They worked on the estate that flanked the road. It was eleven and they were having their breakfast. They had already worked for hours. Their breakfast consisted of tin mugs filled with a drink called mauby, a brownish drink made from the bark of a tree, and four or five small round biscuits, rather like our own cheese biscuits. I squatted with them by the roadside and we talked. They were cheerful and friendly and not a fraction as restrained as the immigrants I had interviewed in Britain. What would they have for lunch, I asked. Perhaps another mug of mauby or perhaps it would be lemonade. But that would be a drink, I said; what would they eat. They laughed among themselves at my ignorance. Then one of them said: "A man who has a penny will buy a few biscuits." But not one among them had a penny for biscuits. There were two who had a few coppers each but they were keeping that to take home. They had families to be fed. We talked a while more along general lines and then we got down to the hard facts of their lives. I later checked and corrected what they told me. But Basically they had given me the facts of what it means to be a working man in Barbados today.

The sugar industry employ's approximately 25,000 people during the in-crop season. During the out of crop season - more than half the year - this figure drops to between 7,000 and 10,000. The average earnings of a cane cutter is 18 dollars a week. This is during the incrop season. During the out of crop season the few who are employed are given only 3 days' work a week. The most they can earn then is 6 dollars a week. How these people live, what they eat, how they feed and clothe their children during the long months of unemployment is the 'miracle' my trade unionist friend mentioned to me.

One day I stood at the docks and watched a shipload of migrants steaming

out of Bridgetown's sunny harbour. And all about me was the gay warmth of the friends seeing them off. I had spoken to ~~the people of~~ many of the people on the ship. In the main they didn't think they were going to 'Paradise' or anything as fancy as that. They were going 'home' to Britain because the 166 square miles of their island home found it difficult to support ^{its} 212,000 people on King Sugar, and because tourism and the other industries their leaders dream about have not yet materialised and, as one told me: "A man must live".

three

I spent only a ~~few~~ days in the small and lovely island of Antigua; only long enough to be tremendously impressed and excited by the land redistribution programme carried out by the trade union majority led by Vere Bird in the tiny island's legislature. Government, here, is acquiring the big estates, cutting them up into small economic units and leasing them out to landless peasants. In return the government demands of the peasant that he produces a certain basic minimum of crops each year. Failure means that he would lose his land. I saw this project at work. It was one of my most exciting and hopeful West Indian experiences. For here, as in Africa, land is the life of the people. Certainly, this idea of the redistribution of land might well be one of the small islands' greatest contribution to the greater British West Indian Federation. And the way I saw peasants everywhere respond to the challenge of 'produce or give up' was most heart-warming, filled me with hope of optimism for the future of these islands.

#

3.

I flew into Kingston, Jamaica and found myself in the final phases of a year-long celebration. 1955 marked the 300th year since the British sea captains, Penn and Venables landed in Jamaica and captured it from the Spaniards. Festivals of art, music and dancing were taking place through the length and breadth of the island. The mood and atmosphere, especially in Kingston, was gay and filled with hope for the future. Adlai Stevenson, presidential candidate in the U.S., had spoken at a giant rally two days before my arrival. A plane-load of Hollywood film stars were due to arrive in a few days' time. I was invited to the theatre within a day of being there. The important London daily and weekly papers were easily come by. The People's National Party was preparing for its annual conference much as the political parties do in this country. This was no far-flung isolated island, cut off from the rest of the world. It was very much in the world, very much in the stream of things. And behind the coastal plains the hills and mountains rose, touched with purple at sunset and making it an unutterably lovely land.

And in the streets of Kingston and Spanish Town and Morant Bay and Port Antonio and Black River and Falmouth and all the other towns, people moved about in clubs and pubs and offices and worked together and played together without any regard for race or colour. Sure, there might be a small white lunatic fringe riddle with white racism, and a small black lunatic fringe riddle with black racism. They didn't really matter. Basically Jamaica is, in terms of race relations, the happiest country I have ever visited. Jamaica can teach the rest of the world much about how different racial groups can live together in peace and good fellowship. I know of no other English speaking country as free of racism

and racial prejudice as she is. And I have met few people as warmhearted and friendly as her people, of all shades and colours.

The island lies almost in the middle of that 2,000-mile long curving chain of islands. It is the largest of the British islands with an area of 4,411 square miles and a population of $1\frac{1}{2}$ millions, slightly more than the British total population of the other islands put together. It is, politically, the most advanced, the most mature of the British islands, the only one with a clearly defined two-party system.

~~Jamaica gained universal adult suffrage after the 1938 riots and Alexander Bustamente, leader of the Jamaica Labour Party and the Bustamente Industrial Trade Union, was elected to power.~~

The story of modern political development in Jamaica dates back to 1938 and the riots of the hungry and homeless and workless in that year. Alexander Bustamente put himself at the head of the rioters and was imprisoned. Norman Manley, under the influence of the late Sir Stafford Cripps, founded the People's National Party in September of 1938. Bustamente came out of prison and formed the Bustamente Industrial Trade Union of which he was 'life' president, secretary, etc. This was the beginning of the struggle for self-government in the island. By 1944 the struggle had reached the point where Jamaica could hold its first general elections. Bustamente, who had by now formed his Jamaica Labour Party, won the elections. He was in power for 10 year. At the general elections of January, 1955, Norman Manley's People's National Party finally won power after 10 years in opposition. A new phase of Jamaica's political development was thus set in motion.

Just what this new phase meant I saw for myself as I wandered about the

country.

In the rugged hills of upper Trelawny, I came across a vast 4,500-acre stretch of land called 'Allsides' because, they say, it was on all sides of the road along which I drove. The land was the property of an absentee owner living in England. He had been the absentee owner for upwards of 40 years. Half the property is rented out to something like 1,400 peasant tenants who pay 34/- per acre per year. They have to pay this rent in four quarterly instalments. There is a resident overseer on the land whose sole function was the collecting of the rent from the peasant tenants. This man cultivated about 12 acres of land for his own personal needs. There was therefore over 2,000 acres of land lying fallow with land-hungry peasants all about. It is mountainous land and erosion can be bad in places, it ^{was} particularly bad at Allsides. But why worry, the absentee owner's income was assured and it was a tidy sum.

I hunted out one of the more prosperous of the tenants. I found a man ~~called~~ named Webb, aged 44. He was married and he and his wife and their six children lived in 16 by 9 foot shack. The shack had wattled sides and a thatched roof and the inside walls were papered with newspapers. They had boards on the floor. Not all peasants have that. This room was divided into three compartments. There were four single beds. Webb rented a total of three acres, scattered in little parcels of a $\frac{1}{2}$ acre here, another $\frac{1}{2}$ or $\frac{3}{4}$ acre a mile away, and so on. He estimated that he earned £150 a year off his crops. His wife earned £5 a year from 'higgling' - selling at the weekly village market.

Webb refused to put into practice any soil conservation methods. He said there was no point as he could be turned off the land any time. He might fall ill and be unable to pay one quarter's rent and be turned off. For the same reason he would not build a better and more permanent house for his family.

I left the Webbs at Allsides and got down to Kingston in time to sit in on

a debate in the House of Representatives. Chief Minister Manley was introducing a long complicated bill called 'The Land Bonds Bill'. Later, privately, I told the Chief Minister about my journeying and what I had seen at Allsides. He nodded and smiled but said nothing.

And then, a few days before I left Jamaica, the Chief Minister told me what his land Bonds law was all about. It was to give security of tenure to the Webbs and those like them who constitute the overwhelming majority of Jamaica's population. This law had, in fact, given the Jamaican Government the power to buy, compulsorily if necessary, land like Allsides and give it back to the peasants.

A few weeks later the Government did acquire the Allsides property. The absentee owner had agreed to the purchase. Government would pay £5,000 in cash and Land Bonds to the value of £45,000.

And in the rugged hills of upper Trelawny the Government's Christiana Land Authority went into action.

Webb would now receive a continuous and workable piece of land and, provided he works his land well, he will have that security of tenure that would make it possible for him to build a house in which his wife and children can take pride and to work his land with love and care, knowing that only he and his will benefit from the sweat of his brow. For this Land Bonds law is the most important thing that has happened to the Jamaican peasantry since the emancipation of the slaves.

This, then, is the new phase. It speaks well for the future of Jamaica and that greater West Indian Federation to which all ~~Yop~~ West Indians look with so much hope. I left the West Indies caught in their hope.

4.

~~As you know,~~ I would like, now, to tell you of ^{two outstanding} ~~a few of the~~ people I met in the West Indies. As you know, the West Indies have produced some very outstanding political leaders: I could mention names like Albert Gomes of Trinidad, Grantley Adams of Barbados, Vere Bird of Antigua, Norman Manley of Jamaica, and many others as well. But it is not of these ~~people that I want to talk~~ political leaders that I want to talk.

First I want to tell you of a gentleman who is nearly seventy now and who is universally respected as the Elder Statesman of the West Indies. Gordon Ash who for many years was the Information Officer in Sierra Leone and now has the same job in Trinidad, took me to meet the old gentleman. His name is Theophilus Albert Marryshow. He is one of the tallest and thinnest men I have ever met. Everybody called him Uncle Teddy. He had been a member of the Legislative Council of his native island of Granada continuously for thirty years, and for all those years he had crusaded for the federation of the West Indian islands. And as you know, that great dream of his has now become reality and the first West Indian Federal elections will take place early in 1958.

We talked mainly about Africa on that Sunday morning: he had followed events there closely and wanted to know all I could tell him about recent social and political developments. How were Zik, Nkrumah and Dr. Margi(?) doing, and what were all these difference that divided our people? I tried to answer as best I could. He was unhappy about South Africa and Kenya but very hopeful about West Africa. He wanted people from the West Indies and Africa to visit each other and get to know each other better. I left him feeling I had been in the company of a good and great patriot, in the company of a man who had devoted his life to

the cause of his people and who had found happiness in it.

Next, I met a lady who was the leader of The Coterie of Social Workers. Her name is Miss Jeggers. She reminded me so strongly, in speech, gesture and movement, of our own women in Africa that I found it hard to think of her as a West Indian and not an African. Miss Jeggers had asked me to meet her at one of her feeding centres, so I turned up at lunch time. The place was ^{behind} ~~off~~ one of the main streets of Port of Spain, the capital of Trinidad. I recognised it by the crowd of children outside the big door. An elderly lady met me at the door, we fought our way past the kids and went into the big kitchen where Miss Jeggers and some of her ladies were cooking lunch in huge pots, each one big enough to take a whole sheep. Around us was the noise of children; shouting, talking and laughing. One of the ladies went out and told the children they could go upstairs. They climbed a flight of narrow wooden stairs in pairs. Miss Jeggers finished her work in the kitchen and told me we could go up. We followed the children up into a huge hall with rows of tables and benches. They stood up as we came in and waited till Miss Jeggers told them to sit down. Some of the ~~other~~ ladies and the bigger girls served the food. There was silence while Miss Jeggers said grace, then, three or four hundred children sat down to a happy meal. Well, you might say, so a few hundred children are having lunch: what's so important about that! Simply this: it is all free and the ~~single~~ result of Miss Jeggers' determination that the children of the poor and hungry should be well-fed and should go to school. Before she started this centre hundreds of children were permanently hungry, and empty bellies are not the best aids ~~in~~ to school work. I know it only too well: I know how hard I found it to concentrate on my lessons because my belly was empty when I was a child. And I know how often I did not go to school but went, instead, in search of food. And, remembering my

own hungry childhood days, I was glad that the slum kids of Trinidad had Miss Jeggers and her Coterie of Social Workers. But feeding the kids was only part of the job they did. They had welfare committees, committees to look after the welfare of blind people and prison committees. But these were not just talking committees. They met twice a week to plan the work they ~~did~~ proposed doing and then they got down to work. There was no room for ladies who just wanted the honour of being on committees. Each member had to work, and work hard. Enough food to feed nine hundred children each day had to be got, prepared and cooked. Each member had to go out and collect a certain sum of money from the wealthy people and businesses of the island. The property where they fed the children had been bought as a result of such 'beggings'. The Coterie ran a hostel for teachers, typists and other 'better class' girls; another hostel for working women, a home for blind women, and day nurseries to take care of the children of women who had to go out to work. It was all highly organised and very efficiently run, and the government of the island now helped the Coterie with grants of sums of money to help in their work. But when Miss Jeggers started this work single-handed 35 years ago hardly anyone paid any attention; no one was interested.

It is very different today. The fame of the Coterie of Social Workers has spread and Miss Jeggers can now choose her members with care. The Coterie has four branches in the island, and they have made it a rule that no branch should have more than a hundred members.

As we watched the children at their meal that warm day, I said to Miss Jeggers: "This is wonderful. But it must have been hard to build it ~~up~~ up to this. Were you ever discouraged?"

A smile touched her face, black as the African night. She nodded:

"Yes," she said quietly. "It was hard when I began in 1921, very hard." Then she smiled again and added: "But if you do something with your heart, and do it honestly, God prospers it."

I wished desperately then that the women of Africa would follow the example of Miss Jeggers and her Coterie of Social Workers in feeding the young and taking care of the weak and the helpless. This daughter of Africa, three hundred years removed from her African ancestral home, was, it seemed to me, setting a great example and challenge to her sisters in Africa. I hope they take it up!

5.

The plane came down at New York's Idlewild airport in the early evening: there was snow on the ground and it was bitterly cold. That same morning I had ~~been~~ left a warm sunny Jamaica where it was too hot to wear anything but the lightest cotton or linen clothes. Now, as I got out of the plane, I shivered in the thick woollen suit into which I had changed. I wished I were back in the West Indies, back in the sun instead of in this cold, freezing place. But I was excited too. This was my first visit to America and there was much I wanted to see and many people I wanted to meet. America had been for me, as a boy, as it has been for so many ambitious young Africans, a wonderland, a place that challenged the imagination. Now, at last, I was in America.

The plane had flown over land for a large part of the journey and this had given me an idea of just how enormous this country was. Later, I travelled by plane and train to Washington, Chicago, North Carolina, ^{and} Tennessee and got a further idea of the vastness of the country. And I had then not covered all of it.

I passed through customs and then set out on the long drive into New York with a friend who had come to meet me. At the entrance to a beautiful, well-lit tunnel, my friend pulled up beside a little shed. A policeman with a gun tied to his waist came out of the shed. My friend gave him some money and we drove on, into the tunnel. I asked what this was all about. My friend explained that here all motorists going from one area into another paid a fee which was used for the upkeep of the roads; and certainly, American roads are wonderful. My friend went on explaining, but there was so much to see and I only half heard him. From

a great distances I saw the towering skyscrapers of New York; they were points of light creeping up and up into the black night, hundreds of feet above the ground, and towering above them all, was the lit up peak of the Empire State, the tallest building in the world. It was like something out of a world of fairy tales, a little like the world of Amos Tatuola's fantastic ghosts. But there was nothing unreal about this city that grew upwards and we were soon driving along the broad avenues of New York. It was nearing Christmas and the whole city was decorated with millions of multi-coloured lights. There were tall, glittering Christmas trees in some of the avenues and the shops, still open though it was nearing ten o'clock in the evening, were crowded with people and stacked with good. The streets and avenues were jammed with cars and taxis, and they all seemed to me enormously large; each car seemed at least twice the size of the average English car. And everybody drove on the wrong side of the road! My friend drove down Broadway so that I should see America's fabulous theatreland by night. And fabulous it certainly was. It was a world of twinkling lights spelling out the names of film stars, the titles of plays: lights everywhere and of every colour in the rainbow. The lights of London's theatreland, of Piccadilly, paled into drabness before all this. This was on the grand, American, scale: magnificent, gigantic, colossal, super-colossal!

We left Broadway and drove through Central Park. This was a little more like the world I was used to: a world of trees and grass and park benches.

We stopped for supper at a restaurant on Columbus Avenue but before we got out of the car I said to my friend:

"Are we near Harlem?"

"Oh yes," he said. "Your hotel is above Harlem, on a hill overlooking it. All you have to do is walk down the hill and you're in Harlem."

"Then let's go to Harlem," I said. "I would like to eat my first meal in America in the Negro city of Harlem."

We went first to my hotel, left my luggage, then my friend parked his car and we walked down the hill into Harlem. This was something I had dreamed of as a boy in the slums of faraway South Africa. Then, Harlem and the famous American Negroes who lived and had lived there, seemed like another world. Negro writers like Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen and Claude McKay had made ^{Harlem} famous to me and my friends. The great progress made by the American Negroes in the arts, literature and music had begun with what was known as the Negro Renaissance in the 1920s and '30s in Harlem. Much of the inspiration that had started me on the road to becoming a writer had come from Harlem. And now, at last, I was walking the streets of Harlem.

The streets were as broad as the other streets through which we had travelled. The houses looked the same. There were as many cars as there had been on those other streets. The only difference was in the people. In the journey to New York and through the centre of New York I had been in a world of white men and, as in London or Paris, I had only seen an occasional black person. Here I was in a world of black folk. They were in all the streets, in all the shops, in the cars on the streets, in the taxis, they drove the taxis. The majority of them looked as though they had come straight from Africa; one only noticed the difference when they spoke and in the way they dressed.

We dropped in at Sugar Ray Robinson's bar for a drink. The great man was not there himself; he was in training for that fight at which he won back his world title. Then we went into a large restaurant on 125th Street for supper. While we order our food a fat black man looked down on us from a little upstairs room with a glass wall. Black men crowded the long bar; others, escorting ladies,

sat at the tables. Soft music seemed to come from everywhere in the finely furnished great place.

After a while the fat man came out of his glass-walled room, down the stairs and to our table.

"Excuse me," he said and waited.

I looked at him and said: "Yes?"

He said: "Are you Peter Abrahams?"

I said: "Yes."

He said: "We would like you to come up and greet the folks, Mr. Abrahams."

"What folks?" I asked.

"The folks of Harlem," the fat man said. "They've read your books and know all about you. Come and say hello to them. They would like it."

I followed the fat man up the stairs and into the little glass-walled room. It was a small radio station. The fat man signalled to a black engineer then picked up the microphone and said:

"Hello folks! Guess who's just walked into Harlem. I couldn't believe my eyes! It's our own Peter Abrahams from Africa....Come Peter, meet the folks." He gave me the microphone. That, I think, was one of the great moments of my life. I had not expected Harlem to know me.

6.

The American Negroes welcomed me and made me feel at home everywhere I went. In New York the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured Peoples, the Afro Arts Theatre Group and the American Committee on Africa, gave parties and receptions for me. They were all aware of Africa, of what was happening in Africa. It was the same in Washington where I spoke at the great Negro University, Howard. I found at Howard University the most complete collection of books and papers on Africa. There was a section of the library at Howard University that contained all the books written by Africans and other people of African origin anywhere in the world. In Washington too, I was entertained by the Institute of African-American Relations, a body which is controlled and run by West African students.

Washington, as you know, is, strictly speaking, in the American South but I stayed in a hotel which had, until a very short time, been exclusively for whites only. But when the old Negro porter took me up to my room he said:

"You tell them in Africa that things are changing here and will go on changing."

The journey from Washington to Chicago is an overnight journey and I travelled on a Pullman car, a carriage with sleeping accommodation. There were twelve sleepers in our carriage, each cut off from the other by a canvas curtain. A Canadian Negro and his wife and I were the only black people in the Pullman. Nobody paid any especial attention to us. We shared the same toilets and washrooms as the whites.

At ~~Wash DC~~ Chicago I was met by Professor St. Clair Drake, the American scholar who had just returned from spending a year ~~at~~ teaching at the university

college of the Gold Coast. He was full of excitement about all he had seen and experienced in the Gold Coast. He told me of conversations he'd had with Prime Minister Nkrumah and Opposition leader Busia, of the friends he'd made, and of how much he had enjoyed his stay in Africa.

We went to Chicago's Southside, the Negro section, for a meal. I was surprised to see that the waitress who served us was white. Drake saw my surprise and smiled. He said:

"Don't tell me you don't know your race when you meet it."

I said: "Nonsense; that's a white woman."

He laughed and waited till the waitress came back. Then he said to her:

"My friend from Africa thinks you're a white woman."

The girl smiled and shook her head.

"I'm a Negro," she said.

I shook my head; I couldn't believe it.

"She is," Drake said. "You wait. You'll meet Negroes with creamy white skins, blonde hair and blue eyes. Any person with the faintest drop of Negro blood is a Negro here in America."

I laughed and kept on laughing at the idea of white Negroes, white 'black' people. For this young woman who served us was really white, would be accepted as a white person everywhere in Africa, including South Africa.

Later, I visited the offices of EBONY magazine in Chicago and met its owner John H. Johnson and some of its staff. I know just how widely known EBONY is in Africa so I thought you might like to know the story behind it. EBONY, as I think most of you know, is the most successful Negro magazine in the world. Each month it sells half a million copies, not only to America, but to Africa Europe and Asia as well.

The story of EBONY, like so many success stories, began ~~to~~ with the dreaming of a poor young black boy called John H. Johnson. The young boy had just finished school and got a job with a life insurance company. The insurance companies ~~got~~ a lot of their business from the Negroes. The poor especially wanted to bury their dead decently and for this money was needed and they hardly ever had ready cash. So, each week, they paid a small sum out of their wages to the insurance company so that they could be sure of a decent burial when death came. Thus, because the Negro was so important to insurance, young Johnson was given the job of reading and reporting on everything that was written in the newspapers about the Negro and his life in America. After working hours Johnson often told his black friends about the things written in the white papers. His friends showed great interest. Perhaps, young Johnson thought, all the Negroes would be interested in a Digest of what was written about them. Yes, perhaps they would. He decided to start a magazine called Negro Digest. He searched for someone with money to back the venture. ~~At~~ No-one would. In the end he borrowed 500 dollars, offering his mother's furniture as security. He found a printer willing to give him credit, and in November, 1942, ^{at that time} the first issue of Negro Digest was published, an issue of 5,000 copies. Johnson was ^a young man of 24. Prominent white Americans like Mrs. Roosevelt helped by writing for it. Circulation shot up; whites as well as Negroes read it. Soon, Negro Digest was selling nearly 100,000 copies a month. A poor black boy's dream had come true. Three years after Negro Digest Johnson had paid off his debts and had enough money to launch EBONY, a big, picture magazine in which was mirrored the brighter side of negro life, which showed the achievements of the Negro in employment and business and in cultural and social life. The new magazine started with a first printing of 25,000 copies and was an immediate success.

Today Johnson who is still only a young man of thirty seven, is the biggest Negro publisher in the world, and his Johnson publishing Company controls a vast chain of megazines like TAN, JET and HUE.

Johnson employs more than 150 people today and each year pays out close on a million dollars in wages alone. His staff of reporters wander all over the world in search of news ~~of~~ that is of interest to the 16 million American Negroes and all the other people in all the world who read his magazines. One of his managing editors, Miss Era Bell Thompson, made a tour of ^{all} Africa a few years ago and wrote of what she saw and found there.

And John Johnson has not forgotten his early beginnings or his mother. It was the 500 dollars borrowed on his mother's furniture that set him off on his road to wealth and power. Today his mother is Vice-President of his company and they both have all the money and all the comfort they could ever want.

When I asked Johnson what he thought helped him most to success he said:
that

"We feel/the Negro has made a lot of progress in this country and we want to see him make more, so we show the positive side of Negro achievement. The reason for our success, as I see it, is that we are doing a job no one else is doing in this field."

I think I should end this report of my new world journey on this high note of the Johnson success story. Everywhere in the New World, from the farthesst island in the West Indies to the great United States I found a picture of Negro advancement. Of course, there were failures and setbacks in some places, places where poverty and prejudice seemed to hold sway. But these were far outweighed by the positive achievements of the New World Negroes. And one thing that pleased me very greatly was their keen interest in Africa and all things African.