

A BLACK MOSES AND HIS DREAM OF A PROMISED LAND

INASMUCH as the Englishman claims England as his native habitat, the Frenchman claims France as his home and Americans claim the United States as their land, the time has come, in the opinion of Marcus Garvey and his extensive following, for the Negroes to claim Africa as their native land and to establish a United States of Africa, with him as its Provisional President. The extent of his following, which already numbers, we are told, several million negroes in this country and elsewhere, invests this ambitious project and the personality of its author with unique and even serious interest. Already Garvey, in addition to being provisional president of the projected African commonwealth, an office to which he was elected last August by

a majority of the three thousand delegates in probably the most remarkable race convention that New York City and America ever witnessed, is president-general of the Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities League of the World, president of the Black Star Line of ocean-going steamships, president of the Negro Factories Corporation and editor and publisher of the *Negro World*, the most influential negro newspaper on record; and he is acclaimed by millions of his color as the Black Moses destined, as one fervent biographer says, "to rank in history alongside Nador, Alaric, Attila, Genghis Khan, Cromwell, Napoleon, Bismarck and Washington."

Who, to come down from such a cloud of

titles and names, is this Marcus Garvey? Truman Hughes Talley, in *The World's Work*, reports that shortly after America entered the war there arrived in New York from the island of Jamaica a coal-black negro of the purest African type, whose muscular, chunky, short body was burdened with a negligible load of tangible assets, but whose prognathic-jawed, broad-nosed, kinky-haired head was fairly bursting with an idea as great and heavy as it was intangible. Thirty years old, but pretty well educated,

a traveler and a student in many countries, a journalist, an orator and a human encyclopedia of the affairs of his own race, he came with his vision and has had an up-hill row to hoe. In other words, he has had to work hard for a hearing and his progress has been vigorously disputed by such race leaders as Robert Moton, head of Tuskegee Institute, and W. E. B. Du Bois, of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. American negroes, he was told at the outset, would take no stock in his dream of a dark republic, would not be willing to trade their half-bad status for one which gave scant promise of being anything but something worse. Dis-

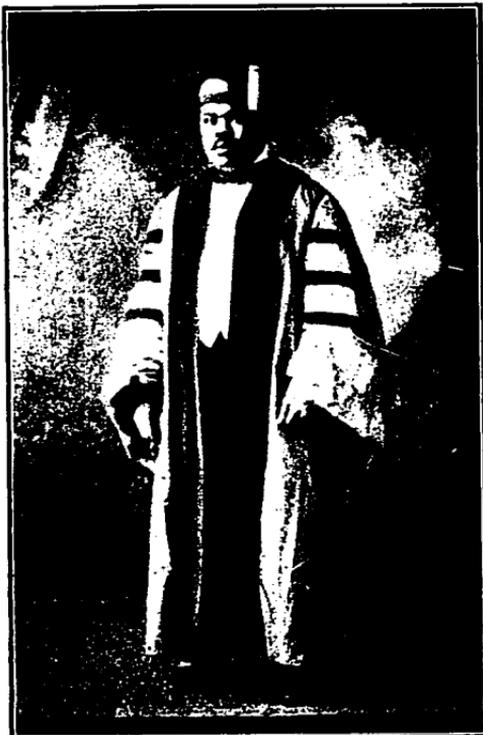
comfited, he returned to Jamaica, but presently came back to "the richest negro city in the world" convinced that only in New York could he launch his ship of a negro State and arouse sufficient whirlwind of material support to fill its sails. He counted on the fact that negro real estate holdings in the Harlem section of the

metropolis exceed \$100,000,000; that there are four known millionaires, ten half-millionaires and more than a score worth more than \$100,000. Savings bank holdings in the district are put at \$30,000,000 and two of the banks are owned by negroes. There are thirty churches and fifty missions. Aware also that there are a million negro farmers in this country, owning more than twenty million acres; that negroes own seven hundred thousand homes in the United States and that they

bought \$225,000,000 worth of Liberty Bonds, this Negro Moses shrewdly appraised U. S. A. as the Promised Land this side of Africa.

After long persuasion, we read, Garvey finally got thirteen influential and representative men not actively identified in the Moton or Du Bois groups to examine his project and hear his plan in full. His vision, or his logic, or his oratory, or all of them, made converts of them. It was a slow fight, but as time went on other leading negroes were coaxed in; eventually a small and rather select meeting was held, with the result that the first branch of the Universal Negro Improvement Association was formed. The news of this move brought down endless verbal and

written anathema upon the leader and his few followers. They nearly withered under the blast of condemnation from the industrial, political, and religious schools of negro thought which in no uncertain terms demanded this disturber be sent back to Jamaica where he could no longer obtrude his revolutionary activity upon



HE ASPIRES TO BE PRESIDENT OF A REPUBLIC IN DARKEST AFRICA

Marcus Garvey, a Native of Jamaica, is meeting with remarkable success in proselyting among those of his race in the United States where he already has several million followers.

the prosperous and more or less satisfied American negro world. But they did not wither. Instead, simultaneously with a concerted move to gain a foothold among the higher class negroes in other parts of the country as nuclei for later branches of the parent organization, there blossomed forth, under the editorship of Garvey, the *Negro World*, a newspaper "devoted solely to the interests of the negro race" and pledged to secure complete and lasting emancipation of the entire black race of the world.

Garvey's first blow was bold and was from the shoulder. Freedom of the sort the white and yellow races enjoy should be the goal as well of the black race, he asserted, and by easy calculation he showed the negro in his total strength of 400,000,000 to be a master of the world, if numbers counted for anything. Garvey challenged the leadership of his opponents in so far, he said, as "they represent the time-serving, boot-licking agencies of subserviency to the whites." Not the least vigorous of the opposition he encountered came from the churches and, it is written, they remain his bitterest foe even while other elements are swinging into supporting line. Garvey called the "white man's religion" unsuited for negroes because it required negroes to believe in a white God, a white Christ, a white heaven and even white angels. Garvey's creed called for a purely negro religion, "with God as a Being, not as a Creature, but in so far as it interprets Him through the Image of a Creature it shows Him made in our own image—black." Various historians have been cited by Garvey to support his contention that Christ was black. Aside from the question of the color of Deity, Garvey declared that the white man's missionaries "have been but the advance agents of slave hunters, rum sellers, and exploiters who have despoiled Africa and ruined our racial heritage." Eighty per cent of the negro clergy in America is still opposed to Garvey, due, his supporters assert, largely to the fact that they rely upon white charity, white precept and even white tolerance for their existence, and that they fear in the promulgation of this iconoclastic creed not only the withdrawal of white support but the enmity and hostile actions of the entire majority American race.

Garveyism, reports the writer in *The World's Work*, was on the verge of collapse shortly before the Black Star Line was incorporated with a capitalization of \$10,000,000 and 2,000,000 shares for sale solely to negroes were issued. While its fate was hanging in the balance, a negro crank stole into his editorial and empirical sanctum and fired four bullets into him, none, however, striking a vital spot. He was badly wounded and crippled in one leg for life, but still in bandages and on crutches he made his way to the hall where the Black Star Line meeting was beginning its doubtful course. Appearing unexpectedly before the gathering, recognition of their wounded leader brought forth cheering and jubilation and from that moment the project of a negro super-government, the redemption of Africa, the financing and building of the Black Star Line, and all the rest of the long and ambitious program seemed in every sense a go. From that moment that enterprise has been as one instilled with new life. Enough money is said to have been raised to purchase three steamships and the buying of three more of greater tonnage is promised in the near future. The company now owns the *Yarmouth*, of 1300 tons, the *Antonio Maceo*, of 1100 tons, and the *Shady-side*, a still lighter vessel that is used only for local excursion purposes. The *Antonio Maceo* was formerly the ocean going yacht of H. H. Rogers. The *Yarmouth* and the *Antonio Maceo* are being utilized now in the New York-West Indian trade, which to-day of course is not heavy, consisting for the most part in passenger traffic. It is the intention of the directors soon to start the *Yarmouth* on the New York to Africa route, with two of the three new vessels to be bought to join her later; the *Antonio Maceo* is to go into the New York-West Indian service and the third of the three ships to be acquired will be placed on the same route. It is the intention to place one of the West Indian route vessels in inter-insular service, so that one ship will serve the general New York-West Indian trade and the other attend to freight and passenger traffic among the dozen or more ports in the Caribbean. The African port is to be Monrovia, the capital of Liberia.

At the time of the convention last August, we are told, the Universal Negro

Improvement Association had obtained more than three million paid members in virtually every city and state in the Union and every colony and country abroad; and since then the membership has neared the four million mark.

"We have no animus against the white man," says Garvey. "All that we have desired, as a race, is a place in the sun. Four hundred million people are too numerous not to have a place in the sun. If sixty million Anglo-Saxons can have a place in the sun, if eighty million Germans

can still have a place in 'the sun, if seven million Belgians can have a 'place in the sun, I do not see why we cannot have a place—a big spot—in that self-same sun." And whether or not the desired sun-spot is to be Africa, with Marcus Garvey basking in command, we read that an emotional Irishwoman viewing the impressive parade that attended the U. N. I. A. convention in New York, with tears upon her cheeks and in tones of despair, cried: "And to think, the negroes will get their liberty before the Irish."

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.