

The Negro World, Marcus Garvey's paper, thru which he reaches weekly his four million negro followers. In this number of September 11, 1920, appears the Declaration of Independence of the negro race, first proclaimed in Liberty Hall, New York City, and the words of the "Universal Ethiopian Anthem"



The Honorable Marcus Garvey, President-General of the Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities League, as he appeared before a mass meeting in Madison Square Garden. "Something of a showman" in public, but in his private office "a carelessly-dressed, ill-shaven, soft-voiced negro, speaking in level tones, with rarely a gesture . . ."

The Negro Moses

And His Campaign to Lead the Black Millions into Their Promised Land

By Rollin Lynde Hartt

FIFTEEN pioneers of African independence—negro surveyors, negro architects, negro builders, negro chemists, negro physicians—sailed recently from New York aboard Black Star liners, owned and operated by negroes.

It is true that the Black Star line consists of two infinitesimal steamers and an excursion boat. It is likewise true that Liberty Hall, where a World Congress of negroes drew up a Bill of Rights last August and proclaimed Africa a nation—free and independent and all that sort of thing—is by no means an imposing edifice. It is true that the Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities League, which promotes the enterprize, makes its headquarters in a pair of rather dowdy former dwelling houses in Harlem, New York. And it is true that Marcus Garvey—"his Excellency, the Honorable Marcus Garvey," to give him his full and gloriously resounding designation—is something of a showman. Ushered in by a brass band, a pseudo-military cohort, and a troop of Black Cross nurses, he appears upon the platform in green and crimson robes.

Yet this thirty-four-year-old Jamaican, who counted hardly more than a score of followers three and a half years ago, now counts four million, two million of whom are black citizens of the United States. Thanks to his daily harangues and to weekly appeals thru his newspaper, he is adding to them wholesale despite the opposition of two of the foremost negro leaders in the United States, Dr. Du Bois on the one hand and Major Martin on the other. No matter what one's attitude, whether satirical, apprehensive, sympathetic, or merely curious, he is at least interesting. I went to see him.

He is black. Splendidly, bituminously black. A full-blooded, low-browed, heavy-jawed, woolly-pated African—the real thing. He glories in it. He rebukes his people for bleaching their skins, straightening their hair, and aping the white man. He would applaud the Zulus who, when presented to a native chieftain, say, "Hail to thee, oh chief! Thou art black!" When I suggested that certain negrophiles in Massachusetts might be induced to put money into the Garvey movement, he said, "We don't want their money; this is a black man's movement." When I quoted a remark of Mr. Carl Akeley's to the effect that American negroes, once established in Africa, might revert to type, he rejoined, "We will take the risk. We mean to show what negroes can do for themselves. It is an experiment; we may lose out, but we may win out."

Recent articles by Mr. Truman Hughes Talley in *The World's Work* had told how Garvey, while studying at the University of London, met the editor of *Africa and Orient Review*, one Duse Mohamed Effendi, half Egyptian, half negro, and caught from him the idea of taking Africa, organizing it, developing it, arming it, and making it the defender of negroes the world over. Was Mr. Talley's interpretation of Garveyism substantially correct? "Yes, substantially; but there are minor inaccuracies. He represents me as saying that Christ was a negro. I don't say that. My belief is simply that Christ's ancestry included all races, so that He was Divinity incarnate in the broadest sense of the word. Then, too, Mr. Talley speaks of my belief in an ancient and superb African empire that has decayed. I don't pretend to know about such matters."

President of the Black Star Line, President of the Negro Factories Corporation, President-General of the Universal

Negro Improvement Association and African Communities League, and Provisional President of Africa, Garvey tells his followers: "I am the equal of any white man; I want you to feel the same way. No one need think we are still the servile, bending, cringing people we were up to fifty odd years ago in this country. We are a new people, born out of a new day in this country. We are born out of the bloody war of 1914-18. A new spirit, a new courage has come to us."

His manner toward me, however, was modest and unassuming. I shall remember a carelessly dressed, ill-shaver, soft-voiced negro hunched up at his desk and speaking in level tones, with rarely a gesture and then only of the expository sort. If his dark eyes burned, it was with an intellectual light. He seems strangely unemotional, perhaps because he has implicit faith in the rationality of his ideal and in its justice. "When the Jew said, 'We shall have Palestine,' we said, 'We shall have Africa.'"

But on the platform he can be fiery.

"During the world war, nations were vying with each other in proclaiming lofty concepts of humanity. 'Make the world safe for democracy,' 'self-determination for smaller peoples' reverberated in the capitals of warring



Garvey's headquarters in Harlem—an unimpressive structure set down in the backyard of a row of dingy tenements

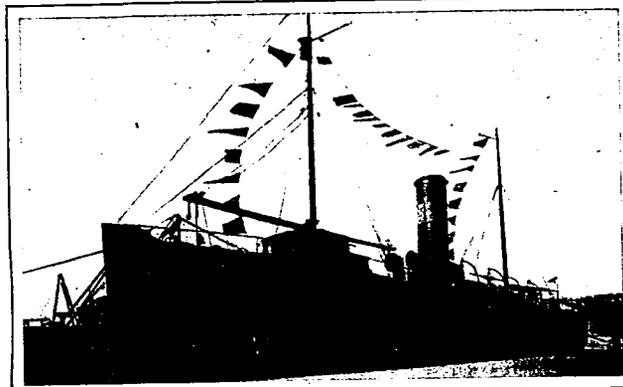
nations opposed to Germany. Now that the war is over, we find these same nations making every effort by word and deed to convince us that their blatant professions were mere meaningless platitudes never intended to apply to earth's darker millions. We find the minor part of humanity—the white people—constituting themselves Lords of the Universe and arrogating to themselves the power to control the destiny of the larger part of humanity. Such an attitude is indeed a curse. In Africa it takes the form of suppression of the right of the African to enjoy the fruits of his ancestral lands. In America it takes the form of lynching, disfranchisement, burnings and the thousand and one petty insults born of arrogance and prejudice. So now comes the negro thru the medium of the Universal Negro Improvement Association demanding the right and taking unto himself the power to control his own destiny. We are too large and great in numbers not to be a great people, a great race and a great nation. I cannot recall one single race of people as strong numerically as we are who have remained so long under the tutelage of other races. The time has now come when we must seek our place in the sun."

That place is Africa, declares Garvey. "Without Africa, the negro is doomed even as without America the North American Indian was lost. We are not preaching any doctrines to ask all the negroes of Harlem and of the United States to leave for Africa. The majority of us may remain here, but we must send our scientists, our mechanics, and our artizans, and let them build railroads, let them build

the great educational and other institutions necessary, and when they are constructed, the time will come for the command to be given, 'Come home!'"

So it is to Africa that the fifteen pioneers of negro nationalism have gone—surveyors to plan railroads, architects to plan buildings, physicians to direct sanitation, chemists to test water supply. "When will they arrive?" I asked. "I can't tell you," said Garvey. "The steamers are to call at British ports en route, and if I were to publish their schedule I might expose them to interference and delays."

He sets great store by this merchant marine of his. It is a commercial venture, granted; but it is at the same time a means to a much larger end. "Africa must be linked to



One of the two little steamers which, with an excursion boat, constitute the "Black Star Line," owned and operated by negroes. It is on these "liners" that Garvey is sending pioneers to Africa to get things in shape before a general occupation of the Promised Land. Fifteen have already gone; surveyors, architects, builders, chemists, physicians

the United States, to South and Central America, to the West Indies by vessels which will unite in fraternal ties the ebony-hued sons of Ethiopia in the Western Hemisphere with their brothers across the sea." Meanwhile, he entertains a hope that Africa, once developed, will attract a wholesale migration. He says to his followers:

"If you cannot live alongside the white man in peace, if you cannot get the same chance and opportunity alongside the white man, even tho you are his fellow citizen; if he claims that you are not entitled to this chance or opportunity because the country is his by force of numbers, then find a country of your own and rise to the highest position within that country."

In Liberia, whither the fifteen pioneers are sailing, Garvey plans to lay the cornerstone of African independence. From Liberia his propaganda is to spread thruout the Dark Continent. "What the fathers of American independence did one hundred and forty-five years ago," he said in a recent address, "is just what the Universal Negro Improvement Association is endeavoring to do for the 400,000,000 negroes of the world and for succeeding generations of the race. It is a dream now; but do you not know that we can make this dream, this vision, a reality?"

A very prominent Garveyite showed me the other day a tabulation of British, Belgian, French, Italian, Portuguese and Spanish holdings in Africa. How does Garvey expect to oust these rather lusty and rather tenacious Powers? It would seem to be something of a job. But what if those Powers had their hands full elsewhere at the time?

"We cannot tell how far distant is that day when the bugle call will be heard, the bugle call to another great world conflict. We can see discord brooding every day among the nations of the world. We can hear the rumbling of forthcoming wars. Methinks I can see the war clouds of Europe—I give them ten years [Continued on page 218

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from now. Oh, I believe in time! I believe in time and I give them ten years to send up that war smoke again. We are waiting for it. When it comes we young men are going to try what virtues there are in the materials they gave us to use in France, Flanders and Mesopotamia. The life I could give in France and Flanders and Mesopotamia I can give on the battle plains of Africa to raise the colors of the red, the black and the green, forever. Whether they desire to salute the flag today we do not care, but we will make them salute it tomorrow."

Just here lies the actuating principle of Garveyism. It is not merely a Back-to-Africa movement. It is not merely an Africa-for-the-Africans movement. It is a movement to win respect and to defend black men in white men's countries thruout the world. Garvey says to negroes: "Not until you can make your race so strong as to strike fear into the breast of that man that has been hounding you for fifty years will black men be safe in any community in which they live. The white man will only respect your rights constitutionally as a citizen of this country, or as a resident of this country, when you have some government behind you. When you can compel a nation to respect your rights because of your connection with some government that is sufficiently strong to support you, then and only then will you be respected. Even as the Frenchman who makes up his mind to live always in America can get the protection of his government when he needs it, so must you."

It is not easy to determine what negroes in general think of Garvey. One gets such responses as, "He is very idealistic," "He builds his mountains too high," or, "I think he's going to waste all that money. What does a colored man know about running steamship lines?" But you notice that invariably the reply is preceded by a moment or two of hesitation and you wonder if perhaps the negro is not giving you the answer he imagines you would like to hear. At all events, every American negro seems to know about

Garvey, and when the Garveyites held high carnival in Madison Square Garden one night last summer the building was thronged to capacity with an all-black audience.

Meanwhile I find it a little difficult to determine what I myself think of Garvey. I laughed at first. Then I felt a sharp pang of sympathy. "A shame," I said, "that this rainbow-hued hope should have obsessed a poor, misguided, fanatical dreamer of a black man!" Hear how he speaks of it:

"While in Washington I went to Mount Vernon to pay my homage and respect to the father of American independence. On my way to Mount Vernon I saw automobiles and carriages and pedestrians all wending their way toward that place and when I got to the gate I saw great crowds of people going in and out. I followed the crowd and was shown the resting place of the great hero of right. And as I gazed at that hallowed shrine a new thought, a new inspiration, came to me. It was the vision of a day—near, probably—when hundreds of other men and women will be worshipping at a shrine. This time the vision leads me to the shrine of some black man, the father of African independence."

But the more I studied him the more I came to respect the moral dignity of his manhood. Says Garvey: "The hour has come for the negro to take his own initiative. It is obvious, according to the commonest principles of human action, that no man will do as much for you as you will do for yourself. Any race that has lost hope, lost pride and self-respect, lost confidence in self in an age like this, such a race ought not to survive. Two hundred and fifty years we have been a race of slaves; for fifty years we have been a race of parasites. Now we propose to end all that. No more fear, no more cringing, no more sycophantic begging and pleading; the negro must strike straight from the shoulder for manhood rights and for full liberty. Destiny leads us to liberty, to freedom; that freedom that Victoria of England never gave; that liberty that Lincoln

never meant; that freedom, that liberty, that will see us men among men; that will make us a great and powerful people."

Coming from a representative of any other race, such utterances would command instant admiration. Must the negro alone cringe and cower? If not, then what will come of all this? Something splendid? Something tragic? Something ominous? Or possibly—nothing? For my own part I see in Garveyism two elements of large significance. It means that the negro is drawing away from the white race. Declares a Garveyite, "Lynchings and race riots all work to our advantage by teaching the negro that he must build a civilization of his own or forever remain the white man's victim," adding, "Race amalgamation must cease; any member of this organization who marries a white woman is summarily expelled."

In the next place, it means that negroes are learning the practicality of united action. What course will that action next take? Thus far no harm has come of it, yet it is a new thing, quite; and, without a more than pardonable exaggeration Garvey observes, "It has been said that the negro has never yet found cause to engage himself in anything in common with his brother; but the dawn of a new day is upon us and we see things differently. We see now, not as individuals, but as a collective whole, having one common interest."

New York City