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AMERICAN CONSULATE GENERAL
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p1/5

Dears,

Last Friday night there was held at Ikoyi a monumental dance given by the Naval Officers (British) stationed in Lagos. For weeks ahead the white population of Lagos was asking one another "are you going to the naval brawl?" and the answer was always yes, due to the fact that real printed invites were sent out weeks in advance. When the final tally was made (or is it tally?) it was found that something like five hundred people were invited and came. Colored lights were strung around the grounds of the Lagos Defence Force buildings, and also hundreds of flag signals all probably meaning things like Bubonic Plague give us a wide berth we are coming to your assistance check your course you are running straight for shore keep your course with the convoy happy new year, etc. All very gay and festive, under the blue tropical night, and so forth. Strains of the RAF band were heard to waft themselves across the green sward (?), slightly off key in spots but "carrying on" in the approved RAF fashion. Two erect and motionless British tars stood guard over the dance floor with bayonets fixed and made everyone feel slightly uncomfortable for them. Free Canadian whiskey was circulated without ice and soda water. In the beginning they did have soda water, but they began to run low quite early in the festivities, so the redoubtable tars who were on temporary shore duty as bartenders merely poured more Canadian whiskey into the glasses and thus saved a lot of precious water. Those among the guests star-scattered on the lawn who could take practically straight whiskey suffered the inevitable results in most cases, and several of these were seen to have narrow escapes from the aforementioned fixed bayonets guarding the all-too narrow entrance to the dance floor. The others, weaker characters who insisted they liked water and ice with their whiskey, suffered in comparative silence. The dance was over at 12:30, and William and I and our party (Mr. Lynch, Anita and Penry, Elsa Campbell, Major Heller) went home. Previous to going to the party we had had a very pleasant party at Mr. Lynch's (Mr. Shantz' house as was) and an excellent dinner. It is always pleasant to sit out on the terrace there in the beginning of the twilight and admire the garden and the bougainvillea and the sunset over the lagoon. White man's grave! In darkest Africa!

But there you are. The other evening, I've forgotten exactly what day it was, we took a drive and a walk after work and before dark. We went out to Victoria Beach and walked along the sand for about a mile. The waves were high and green, and from time to time they threatened to wet our shoes. We walked till we came to a little fishing village, which is quite typically African. Bush huts, with thatched

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leaf roofs. The fishing canoes were drawn up on the beach. They are the same canoes as are pictured in the earliest pictures of West Africa: hollowed out of one large log by burning the insides out, with decorations in color and mottoes all around the sides. Most of the fishermen here are from the Gold Coast, because for some unknown reason the natives of Nigeria never went in for fishing to any great extent. The names and remarks on some of the canoes were amazing: "Sea Never Dry", "Drunket (sic) 'ull Go for get him No fish)", "The Lord is MY Shepherd I shall Not Want" Another one was rather good: "My trust is in the Lörd, Go away Evils". William and I looked at every canoe. Farther on in the village we came upon canoes without mottoes, so apparently there is a certain amount of the Keeping-up-with-the-Joneses spirit which makes some neighborhoods go in for elaborate Christmas tree lights at home, while other districts are content to put out wreaths on their doors at Christmas. ...

Saturday lunch we had with Mrs. Marjory Davis, who used to work at the Consulate. An English lady with ~~black~~ blonde hair and a slightly equine face. Very nice. She and her husband supplied us with the usual West African Saturday lunch- curry. I like the way our Josia makes a curry better, but none the less a good time was had by all. We went home and I was privileged to sleep for three hours, which is the only reasonable and sane thing to do after a West African Saturday lunch. Poor William had to work as usual, but Anita was taking my place. I woke up at six dopey as can be, naturally, and then we had to rush over to Nick Olivier's mess in Ikoyi for a farewell party for Harry McGrath, who has been transferred. William and I were both half asleep all evening and certainly in no mood for a big dinner, even though it didn't come till nine. Nick Olivier is from New Orleans, and runs the mess. He has what to me are rather odd ideas about nutrition and meal-planning. After a thick soup he serves with devastating regularity a horrid creation consisting of a hollowed-out avocado filled with shrimps and mayonnaise covered with strips of red pepper- very nice, but filling....

After that Nick faces you with a slightly stringy fowl of some variety, which in its last days of life must have won a cross-continent race, because there is very little fat on its poor old bones. The appropriate vegetables, most of them in cream sauce or fried, and then, to assuage the lingering pangs of hunger, a pudding. Deary me. What Nick really does up brown is his canapes, really nice little squares of sausage meat on toast, or melted cheese on toast. Lovely, but by the time you have had three or four of them you certainly don't want a heavy dinner, which is what you get. We went home at eleven thirty (very unorthodox for a Saturday night) in a completely somnolent state.

Sunday was the first without Mr. Shantz, and we missed him a lot. We had a really good curry with excellent small chop, both made by our Josia and brought to the beach by Mr. Lynch's steward boy Peter, who always takes care of us at the beach. We went over to Light House (the surf-bathing) Beach, but the waves weren't too good. Mr. L.'s

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fox terrier puppy Dinty (a first cousin of Cappy Price) ran away as usual, and when finally returned, was tied by his leash to a heavy stone, much to his regret. Dinty is a freindly dog, and is always a favorite on the Waafflar when we go home from the beach. The soldiers and bathers always pet him and let him bite their hands, which is just what we are trying to train him not to do. Dinty's poppa belongs to Cap Roberts.

Yesterday Anita and I had another badminton game with Don Huse and MacMillan of PAA, at the Socony-Vacuum mess in Ikoyi. A most hilarious gmae. We all ended up as black as our native friends, due to the fact that it is a loose-dirt court. William, as usual, appeared on the scene when the heavy activity was over. Then we went over to Anita and Penry's house for a while before dinner. Penry and I got into a magnificent argument-cumpbull session about post war problems, and yelled at each other for about an hour, happy as two lawyers. Needless to say, we didn't really settle matters, and plan to fight it out again at some later date. Penry is a very good type.

We are going to Apapa to the movies and dinner with Major Heller to-night. The horror of the situation is that we will have to eat dinner before the movies, which will put us at table at about seven. We usually don't eat till nine out here, so we warned the Major that we won't be hungry at all. Anita is going too, and she and I are in a picklement about the uncivilized customs practiced out at the army messes. The Major only just moved out there, so I imagine he doesn't want to circumvent the local habits, just now at least.

Daily, or at least more than weekly, a fine big pouch comes from Washington. In more than two months there have been three letter in it for me from my large and blooming family. What a wonderful record! That makes almost one letter every two months since I've been away.

LPK

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At the last point in the chronicle we were about to go to the army mess. The food was lovely, even though it was so dreadfully early to be eating. They had lovely American cocoa and really excellent coffee, as much as you want. Likewise gobs and gobs of butter (un~~salted~~ salted creamery same) direct from Wisconsin. They also had some week old funny papers from New York. Naturally, funny papers for the Army have higher priority than useless old things like Diplomatic pouches, which come through in two weeks at best. Or at least so it seems to us, who are jealous as all heck. The fact remains that we seldom get things in less than two weeks. But, I repeat, we are dreadfully jealous of the fact that the army get their funny papers when they are only a week old, very often. You know how vitally interested I am in the life and adventures of Li'l Abner and the other fascinating characters from Dogpatch, Kentucky. Also, occasionally, we have an academic interest in the airmail instructions from the Department of State, which sometimes even have some bearing on the war effort, although of secondary importance to the maintenance of ~~mork~~ morale in the army. I think I may be speaking a trifle out of turn. If so, I'm sorry. Anyway, Anita and Penry and William and I came bounding back home after the movies, in their car (just like ours only with four doors and leather upholstery) singing away in perfect schmaltz harmony of the barber shop quartette variety. We've got "I Can't Give You Anything but Love Baby" worked down till it's simply wonderful. William is wonderful at Tenor parts.

Tuesday we went for a long bicycle ride, all the way to Ikoyi and back. William actually volunteered to go himself. In the evening we stayed at home and had a very good domestic time of it. I made some more curtain and hung it. William re-read passages from "Conditions of Peace" to me, as I worked.

Last night we had the New World Discussion Group meeting at our house. 22 masters, as Thompson puts it. It is a regular weekly meeting society with a chairman and a discussion programme. Last night the topic was "Socialized Medicine, are we in favor of it or agin it?" Dr. Cauchi, our Maltese friend with whom we had palm oil chop one Saturday last month, read the paper of the evening on that subject, and then the group discussed it. The only trouble was that Dr. Cauchi put across his points so well, and every one was in such relatively complete agreement, that it took enormous effort to work up any discussions at all. A Mr. Cooke, from Glasgow, is a regular attendant. He has been sent by the Colonial Office to organize labor unions in Nigeria. He has red hair and a lovely Scoti sh accent. It seems to me that the fact that the British Colonial Office sends out professional Labor Union Organizers to Organize Trade Unions among the natives is a very obvious indication of the entirely different attitude toward social matters in the United States and Great Britain. Anyway, as I was saying, Mr. Cooke (as well as two or three other members of the Group) has a lovely accent strrrraight from Glasgy.

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In order to create a little discussion, and in addition to make the group come out with the definite statement that they didn't think doctors were such a dishonest and mercenary group that they wouldn't do very good work unless they had prospects of making a good tidy profit out of it, Mr. Cooke, in his sly ~~mate~~ Scots way, argued that the Doctors would surely do vurra pur wurrk indeed unless they could make money out of thier patients, and that every-one knows that no really good research wurrk is done on a measly old salary with no hope of getting a better salary than that given by a niggardly State. There were four doctors present, and you can imagine that they all jumped on poor Mr. Cooke at once when he said that! Especially considering that every last one of the doctors present was on a salary from H's Majesty's Government. They all claimed to be very interested indeed in tropical medicine, and to be giving the best they had regardless of the fact that they had no rich old ladies with hypochondria who can pay large fees, but had to subsist on what small stipend the government cared to donate. They went so far as to say that some of the best research is done in Gov't. Laboratories, Mr. Cooke then slyly said that if they felt that way about themselves, he thought it was rather unkind of them to ascribe baser motives and ideals to other professions. So Mr. Cooke won that argument. We had coffe all around, and everyone said the American coffee tasted very good to them. It depleted our none to large stock of coffee quite a bit to serve it to twnty-two persons. At eleven o'clock the decorous meeting was ajourned, and the chairman announced that the discussion of next week would be on the subject, still live and kicking in the hearts of all true Scots, of Scottish Nationalism! Most amoozin.

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This letter had better end
some time.

Lovingly,

LPK