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Lagos, Nigeria; December 19, 1942

Dear Melody,

Many thanks for your interesting letter, and also for the beautiful Christmas card. The latter arrived today, and it made me very sad to think of the "White Christmas" which you all may enjoy. They have been playing that piece very frequently on the radio from London, and it reminds me of all the cheer and good will which we used to have on Christmas in Newark. I fear a hot, sticky Christmas will never seem like Christmas to me, and that is what we can expect here, since the months from December through March are the hottest of the year here.

Your request for a description of Africa is a pretty large order, especially since I have seen very little of it, even of Nigeria. Due to gasoline rationing and the pressure of work, it isn't easy to get away from town, and consequently my only trips have been by air to Accra.

The costal area in which Lagos is situated is low and flat, and is, as a matter of fact, nothing but a sand spit. There is a tendency to be marshy, and although the Government has been trying for years to drain or fill the swamps, they have never had enough men and money. Consequently, there are a good many mosquitos, and they carry malaria, one of the unpleasant features of life on the West Coast of Africa. Back a few miles from the coast, you come to a wide area covered with trees and bushes growing in great profusion. I guess this is what is usually called jungle, and it is difficult to penetrate, even on foot. The natives use machetes to keep the trails and paths clear. I have only seen the fringe of this area, but I am told that orchids are fairly common, although I don't think they are as common as daisies.

In the central part of Nigeria there is a plateau, some 1200 feet above sea level. This is said to be the best part of the country for white people, as it is much drier than the coastal zone and cooler at night. The temperatures are equally high, but it is not so oppressive as the humidity is less. I hope to visit the Plateau before leaving Nigeria; if possible, I would like to go to Jos on my honeymoon. The farther north you get, the drier it gets. The Sahara Desert is moving south all the time, and the land in the north is used mostly for grazing. The Government is considering some long range plans for reforestation to check the spread of the desert. The principal city in the north is Kano, an ancient city with a mud wall which was a center of commerce in the days of Christ. It is ruled by a black Emir, who has millions of devoted followers. The greatest native ruler of all Nigeria, however, is

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the Sultan of Sokoto, who is the spiritual overlord of all the Muslims in the area. His religious authority extends not only over Nigeria, but also over adjacent parts of French West Africa, as far away as Timbuctu. All these native rulers are, of course, under the supervision of British officials, called Residents, but they have a good deal of power in local affairs. It is truly amazing how three or four thousand white people can control 22,000,000 natives without any resort to brutality or harsh treatment. Practically all the police and local armed forces are recruited from among the natives, and the majority of them appear to be reasonably happy, although of course their standard of living is very low compared to what we are used to.

As you will see from the map, there is a railway from Lagos to Kano and from Port Harcourt, the other main port of the country, to Kano, thus enabling the people of the North to send their hides and skins to the sea for shipment abroad. Many of them come to the United States. Air fields have been built in many places, and army officials can reach virtually all parts of the country by air. The economic development of the country has not been pushed very hard, and I think that will be one of the many problems which will have to be faced after the war. Up until now, the British government has acted as a trustee for the natives, preventing, to a large degree, the exploitation of the country by Europeans (i.e., white people) with the idea of saving the riches of the land for the inhabitants when they were able to use them. At the same time, they have tried, with limited success, to educate the people, but the vast majority are still illiterate. It is now felt by many that it is necessary to do more than act as a trustee. The governing power should, they think, take the lead in developing the country, and at the same time be more active in preparing the people for self-government. Care should be taken that the profits of the development should accrue to the natives, and not to private companies. Perhaps the greatest problem, however, is developing skilled technicians among the natives. They have no background in European civilization, and the use of tool and building and repairing of machinery is strange and foreign to them. An educated African once admitted that it was virtually impossible to find a good carpenter in Lagos, and I know from sad experience that competent mechanics are rare if not non-existent. In other words, there must be a much higher quality of technical ability, as well as mere literacy, before there can be any thought of self-government by the West African peoples.

I thoroughly agree with you that we will have to have a much more extensive form of international organization after the war than anything we have ever known before. It seems to me that if it were possible to discard the hatreds and jealousies which have embittered relations between nations for so many centuries, we certainly have the scientific means of achieving a far better world than any of us have ever known. The trouble is that selfishness is inbred in the human race, and of all the times when it might be possible

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to reach a just settlement, the end of a destructive war is about the worst. On the other hand, it is impossible to begin the work of reconstruction until a settlement has been made. Frankly, I am much more worried about the kind of peace which will be forced by the ordinary people of the various countries than I am of what the leaders would do if they could function free from interference. We must remember that not only the big and little manufacturer, but also the laboring man in the United States is going to oppose the lowering of tariffs to a point where world trade again becomes possible. And how can one envisage a sound world unless barriers to trade are removed? The failure to reach a balance of trade which would maintain the customary standard of living and even permit of its improvement causes economic misery, which, in turn, leads to war. I am fully convinced that, had the economic arrangements made after the last war been workable, this war would never have come about. Political issues, I think, usually arise out of economic ones. For instance, if Germany had been prosperous, it would not have been possible for Hitler to have lead the people into a program of political expansion which, as was often pointed out at the time, both inside Germany and elsewhere, would surely lead to war in the end. When times are bad, people will follow anyone who can promise them relief, even if the relief eventually becomes worse than the trouble it was intended to cure.

As far as specific plans for post war international organization, I have difficulty here keeping up with the trend of thought at home because the news reaching us is so limited and it is so difficult to obtain books. My own work is of an administrative nature, and I greatly doubt that my opinion will ever be asked by those who are in a position to shape the destinies of the world. My opinions are worth just as much as yours or anyone else's, no more.

I am glad that you are enjoying life at Denison. There is an awful lot to learn in this world, and I know how eager you feel to soak up as much of it as possible. I wish you success in finishing up in three years, although I hope you won't entirely exclude social contacts and activities, because if you are going to influence the thought of people, you must understand how their minds work, and how they are likely to react to what you propose. The study of people is as interesting as any I know of, and surely one of the first importance.

Here's hoping that you will have a very happy and successful year. I am sorry that I cannot send any Christmas cards this year, but, as I mentioned in a previous letter, there is a paper shortage here and no cards are being made. Please give my best to Carl and your Uncle Curt and Aunt Mary in Washington. I hope I will get home to see you all in another year or so.

As ever,