

I was deeply shocked. It was the first time in my life that anybody had abused me for my light skin. I did not think it was any crime to be light. Indeed, until then I had hardly realised that I differed so much in colour from

most people who were not white.

When I got home I told my mother what had happened. She did not say much but her expression changed to one of inward pain.

A week later two welfare officials visited the

school. When they saw me they carried on a whispered conversation with the principal. I learnt later that they wanted to know whether I was a white child. ●

[to be continued]

## Comment

Selma  
1965

NO ONE WAS QUITE SURE how they were to act. The mimeographed programme handed around in front of the capitol on Thursday afternoon scheduled five minutes for "Old Testament Reading" and five minutes for "New Testament Reading". It also noted that there would be a presentation of a replica of the Liberty Bell by the Philadelphia City Council. But nobody opened a Bible all day and the Liberty Bell never had its chance. For within minutes after the clustered professional folk singers had finished and almost as soon as the whole crowd of thirty thousand had welled up to flood the top of Dexter Avenue, the tone of the climax of the Selma to Montgomery March became clear and people all of a sudden knew why they were there. This was something new in America.

Through the five days of marching the Christian militants had mixed with the political militants, the bleeding hearts mixed with the adventurers, the professional liberals with the Black Belt peasants. Only at the end, below the steps of the capitol, did they all find out what they were there for. Only there did they sense their capacity for revolution.

MOSTLY UNCONSCIOUS of the implications of their demand for a revised America, these good people marched up Dexter Avenue behind the United States flag and sang the National Anthem behind Mrs. King's reedy lead. Everyone's first personal concern seemed to be not to offend. These *were* good people who had marched gently and self-consciously to correct, to rectify, something in their country (Ralph Bunche justified their being there when that afternoon he said:

"No American can be an outsider anywhere in America.") which history had carried beyond. Yet they shook the earth with their soft feet. Whatever their intentions were before they actually stood there in Dexter Avenue looking up at the startlingly white capitol building, the act of their being there was an emphatic assurance that America was going to change itself, that the nasty license of a "we" and a "they" had expired in America.

That day in Montgomery the best in the country served notice that the United States would soon be truly one country with one people. The issue that afternoon was not segregation or miscegenation or equality under the law. It was freedom, freedom within the explicit constitutional ideal of the American experience.

THE OLD HORSES LIKE A. Phillip Randolph talked for only a few seconds. The political radicals like James Bevel and Fred L. Shuttlesworth shouted good-natured taunts up toward George Wallace, hidden high behind the venetian blinds. The leaders from the field like James Forman and Albert Turner took their opportunity to inform the crowd of practical matters like the many dozens of activists sitting in Alabama jails without bail money. And Martin Luther King, often referred to publicly that day in the African political mode of "My Leader", perorated all remaining question out of the gathering and then told them to go home quietly. They did, many of them even still unconscious of the implications of the exhilarating change which they had just helped to begin. D. E. STEWARD ●