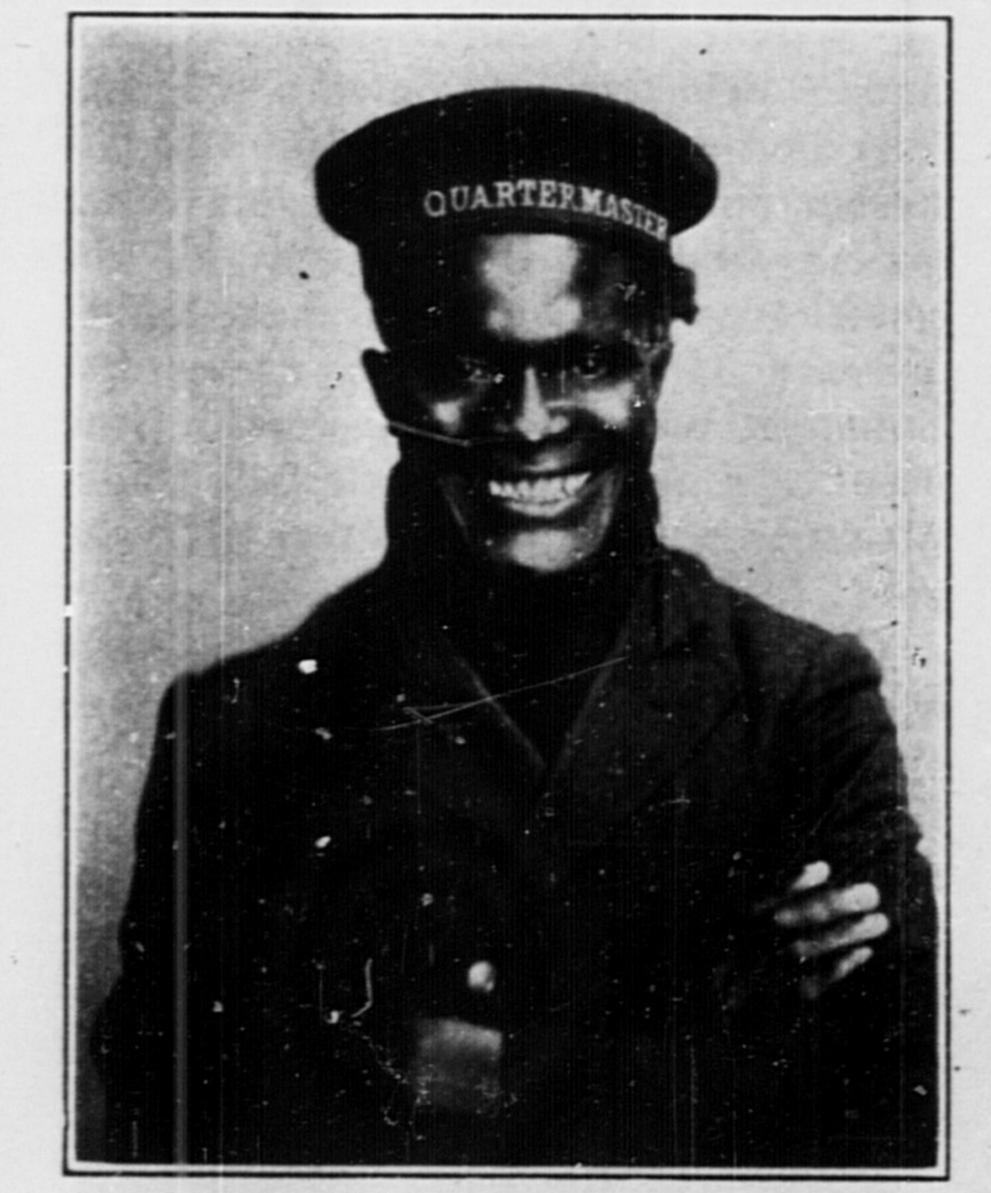
## THE N.A.A.C.P. BATTLE FRONT

## A NEGRO SEA HERO

THE motion picture camera men were turning the cranks of their machines in front of the City Hall Building of New York. On the steps stood a small group of people while an admiring crowd watched from the Plaza. Down on this scene looked the soaring tower of the Woolworth Building. Opposite was the old Fede al Building, in which testimony was bring taken concerning the sinking of t e steamship Vestris, off the Virginia Coast, with a loss of one hundred and eleven lives.

In the center of the group on the City Hall steps, small, neatly dressed, black, with a firm chin line, quiet demeanor and a smile that showed two rows of very white teeth, stood Lionel Licorish, Barbadian quartermaster of the Vestris, who single handed saved twenty lives, kept a life-boat full of people afloat for twenty-four hours during a gale, and then modestly admitted he had "done his duty". Next to Lionel Licorish, also small, and dapper, and smiling, with a twinkle, stood the Mayor of New York City. On the other side of Licorish, stood Nathan Straus, whose efforts in behalf of good milk for babies are known throughout the country. Beside the Mayor stood Grover Whalen, who has welcomed royalty to New York City, and others in the group included Charles H. Tuttle, United States Attorney in charge of the Vestris inquiry, and James Weldon Johnson, Secretary of commission or had told a more intelli- them. the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

the City Hall for this occasion. They ing from Mr. Tuttle was the more im- rather inclined to believe that if we did' included clergymen, editors, among pressive, in that a cowardly attempt a little more while the ship was sailthem Alderman Fred R. Moore, editor had been made to throw the blame for ing smoothly, along the same line, if of the New York Age; W. H. Davis, the sinking of the vessel upon a we had the same willingness to accept editor of the Amsterdam News, and "mutiny" of the black gang, the fire- assistance and the same absence of dismany others well known in the life men, who had stuck by their posts and crimination, even this would be a of Harlem and of New York City. by orders until the last moment and greater country than it is today." They were present at the highest honor had left the Vestris only a few minutes Finally, Lionel Licorish, asked to do the city could bestow on any citizen: before she sank into the depths of the what was probably the "hardest job in an official welcome by the Mayor.



Lionel Licorish

of a colored man. It showed, he said, that courage knows no limitation of race, creed or color.

who followed Mr. Johnson, spoke of to quartermaster Licorish the Mayor his gratification at being able to be said: gent straightforward story than this "That was all right out there in the same little black quartermaster from raging waters. That was fine when There were many who had come to the Barbadoes. This statement com- the ship was going down. But I am

IN addresses delivered in the official had promptly characterized this attempt stood quietly and addressed the gatherwelcoming room of the City Hall, to slur the black gang as a cowardly ing. He said he would wish no one to the reason for these ceremonies was subterfuge, pointing out to the news- go through what he had endured made quite clear. Speaking for the papers and people of New York and through a long night some two weeks N. A. A. C. P., Mr. Johnson said he the nation, that it was only the officers before. He would not wish to go took a pardonable pride in emphasizing of the Vestris whose memories of the through it again. But it was a great the fact that of the heroic actions in disaster were vague and confused; that thing to have come through it and be one of the worst sea disasters that had there had been no semblance of disci- alive this day. Then, with a flash of ever occurred off the American coast pline or centralized authority on the smile that brought a sympathetic re-

of the passengers; and that the men who behaved in heroic fashion and later told honest, clear and straightforward stories before the investigating commission were Negroes: Lionel Licorish and Joseph Boxhill, a colored fireman.

HE third speaker to pay tribute to Lionel Licorish, was the aged Nathan Straus, who said that this was his first visit to the City Hall and that it took such an act of bravery and an opportunity to pay tribute to it such as this to bring him there. He said emphatically that one of the dreams of his youth had been to save a human life, and that there had been no human being he was more anxious to meet than quartermaster Licorish.

The last speaker but one at this impressive occasion was Mayor James Walker of New York. The Mayor spoke of the city, the greatest in the Western Hemisphere, probably the greatest in the world. He touched upon the various races and nations repre-U. S. District Attorney Tuttle, sented in its population. Turning then

present and to pay tribute to a man "When you left that ship and who had shown not alone bravery but reached out your hands to save someintelligence. Mr. Tuttle described the one else's life, it is fair and reasonable action of Lionel Licorish as "a shaft of to suppose that no one asked you what light stabbing the darkness" of the race you belonged to-no one asked night that hung over the Vestris dis- you where you were born and no one aster. He added, speaking as United was interested in your color. They States Attorney in charge of the fed- were mighty glad to have your arms eral inquiry, that no witness on the around them and they were mighty stand had more favorably impressed the glad to accept the help you brought

a quartermaster's life", to reply to an The N. A. A. C. P., incidentally address by the Mayor of New York, the outstanding act of bravery was that ship and no orders issued for the safety (Will you please turn to page 27)

THE CRISIS

## THE POET'S CORNER

## THE PSALM By ANNICE CALLAND

"During the several years spent in the West Indies, I resided for almost a year in the city of Saint Marc, Haiti. While stopping at the hotel there I met a Negro woman of great influence in Haiti during the years Guilliame Vilbrun Sam was President of Haiti. At the time was in Saint Marc, she was managing the hotel there and as we became acquainted, she told me many interesting stories of the West India Negroes, 'The Psalm' being one of them. I do not vouch for the truth of the story and neither did she for that matter, but I loved her stories and have been trying to put them into poems.

"The dialect used is that of the less fortunate English speaking Negroes of British governed Islands as I remember it."

CHRIST Jesus Almighty, I is trustin' in yo'! O Lord, save I! Save I! De sea is bellowin' with hell in its mouth, Lord Jesus hear it cry!

"I is promis' yo' I is preach de Gospel, Preach it in Bairbados. De ship she shudders; she is breakin' up, God keep I when she goes!

"Dey mus' go firs' de women an' de childern.

Grey things creep up lak ghos'! O Lord Jesus, let I live! Save I From de sea's mad demonry hos'!"

"Laance vo' isn't ever been in Bairbados, Dey hates us Jamaicans dere; Does dey kill yo' dey do it with de Where is yo' den? Where?"

"I is tellin' yo', brother, I is work for I is promis' Him I go;

An' I isn't been killed off yet, is I? I isn't goin' borrow no woe.

"Though I is 'fraid of death by de Psalm I is willin' to take a chance." "Den yo' is right to go ahead; De Lord watch over yo', Laance."

PARBADOS lies in Caribbean waters, Dripping in colorful light, And sun-sifted shade of the tangled bush Sweet as lime flowers at night.

vibrant

With taut-tuned, steel-like strings When Lance made his way to the mission house-Staunch scion of jungle kings.

His soot black body was six-foot-two; His muscles rippled and rolled Like the waters of a sleek, jet black cascade;

His eyes were soft yet bold.

The strangest feature of his strange face Was his nose convex like a beak. His golden voice flowed like sunlight Over June's rose tinted cheek.

When Lance in new white shirt and trousers Entered the tabernacle door,

The "revivalis' meetin'" was in full Brother Anselm held the floor.

He had promised Lance that he should

Was helpful and benign When Lance plead: "I is got de voice; I kin preach, Mahster, pleas' yo' be so kin'."

flowing; He drew himself up tall;

Let his features soften and his dark eyes While he preached of the sin of all.

His hearers cried out hysterically; Their African fervor soared. Till-"No damned Jamaican kin save A black Barbadian roared.

66 TY/HY is yo' preachin' to us in W Bairbados, Yo' lyin' whelp of a spy?" Lance said: "I is come for de God Al-Who knows yo' is tellin' a lie."

He is come to spy on us," Scraggs, the Barbadian leader barked,

"Grab on to dat spyin' cuss." "Baack to de boats on de carrenage;

Baack to de council room; He will tell us dere what he is doin' here Or go to de devil's doom."

For black Barbadians rule black Barbadians As only Obeah-taught can Surreptitiously under the rule Of the governing White Man.

The evening tradewind was faintly Thick walls of stone formed the squat old building Well hidden in jungle bush; There Lance was brought through heavy door, In the tropic evening hush.

One thing struck hard on Lance as he

Four rings in the wall of stone, Four rings where a man could be spread-And no friend hear his moan.

"Dere's jes' one way to kill a Jamaican," Their brutal chieftain said. "De Psalm! De Psalm!" his comrades They felt he was good as dead.

Their forbears living in Africa Had been Papaloi ruled men-To kill let a proper curse be uttered, Foes died invariably then.

ANCE stood immobile as Scraggs sternly ordered: "Fetch he to de en' wall!" There they lashed him to the iron rings Where he towered huge and tall."

"Fetch de Book, an' de drums, an' de caandles," Scraggs barked in a passion filled

"Yo' is voted to kill him by de Psalm; On his soul mus' res' your choice."

In ringing words Lance defied his

"Yo' kin pray till yo' lose your breath; Burn a thousan' caandles, sing ten thousan' Psalms, Yo' kin never pray I to death!"

The roar of hard hands on drumheads thundered

And broke the midnight calm; The Barbadian chief flung his arms in And began the chosen Psalm:

"Hol' not Thy peace, O God of our His voice cried in the gloom. "Down with dat swine, dat lyin' Jamai- It was the most powerful curse they

> More final than Voodoo Doom. With howls like wild beasts scenting

> His followers made reply: "For de mouth of de wicked an' de

> mouth of de deceitful has opened agains us: He has spoken agains' us with a lyin'

With outflung arms, all cried:

With black bodies bending in unison,

"He is compassed us about with words of hatred, An' is fought agains' us without a cause. Set Thou a wicked maan over him;

An' let Satin staand at his right haand. When he is judged let him be found

(Will you please turn to page 27)

January, 1929