CURACAO.

It would not be possible to say that we received the news of the transfer to Curacao with any particular enthusiasm. I had gone into the Service with a feeling, even if it may have been somewhat vague and ill defined, that I would be able to accomplish something for our Government. It had seemed entirely proper that in the Consular Service I should begin at an insignificant and unimportant post such as Fort Erie in the same manner as in the teaching profession I had deliberately started out by taking charge of a one-room school in the hills of Berks County in eastern Pennsylvania. It was impossible however not to have the impression that the transfer from Fort Erie to Curacao did not involve any promotion or increase in responsibility or opportunities for usefulness.

In the year and a half which had passed since my admission to the Service, out of the seven men who had entered at the same time at least five had received promotion to the next class. For fourteen years I had been more or less accustomed to being a rather severe judge of my own capacity and of the results of my own work. Things had never come to me easily and my life prior to entering the Service had been one of constant struggle. Anyone who has had to work and to make his own way in the world is constantly measuring himself with his associates and competitors. If therefore I did not know all of my weaknesses I knew at least the most glaring ones, and if I had
exaggerated the few good qualities I may have possessed, I had at least a fair idea of what they were. Of these five men who had been promoted I felt that I was easily the equal if not the superior in capacity for usefulness and I had grave doubts as to whether I had after all done the right thing in going into a service in which advancement seemed to depend upon political considerations and influence.

For the sake of the future therefore it seemed best to settle at once the question as to whether we should remain in the Service or not and I went to Washington for the specific purpose of calling upon Mr. Carr who received me very courteously but was considerably nonplussed when I told him that I was seriously considering whether I should remain in the Service and proceed to Curacao or not, or whether in justice to myself and to the Department I should resign. He asked what had led me to this conclusion and I then recalled to him the conversation which he had had when I accepted the appointment at Fort Erie, during which he had said that he considered it possible for a young man to make his way in the Service without the use of influence. I brought out briefly the fact that five of the seven men who had entered when I did had been promoted and that therefore either my judgment as to my aptitudes for the Service must have been wrong or that his statement as to the lack of necessity for political influence being necessary was incorrect. I shall always remember the gentle smile with which Mr. Carr met this statement.
and after some moments of reflection he reached in a drawer in his desk from which he took out a little book which I have always surmised was a sort of intimate personnel record which he kept for his own use. After some time he ventured the statement that he reckoned I had been lost in the shuffle and that he still considered that I was good material for the Service and would be pleased if I should keep on. He indicated that I would not have anything more to complain of if I kept on the road on which I had started. These words coming as they did from him meant a great deal to me, not only in the way of personal encouragement but in the way of encouragement concerning the Service for I had already learned to love it and would have disliked to give it up.

My fears however in spite of this confidence were not entirely quieted and I said "But why if you think I am any good at all do you send me to a place like Curacao which no one seems to know anything about?". Again that pleasant smile which all of us in the Service know and love because we have learned that behind it is one of the most kindly spirits that ever had to deal with men, and he said "If you don't know why we are sending you to Curacao within several weeks after your arrival then you let me know, and we will find another place for you but you will not be quite the man I believe you are". With these few words he put the assignment to Curacao in an entirely different light and put into it some of the atmosphere of high
adventure, and when my wife and I took the steamer for Curacao it was in that spirit. We left by the CARACAS of the Red D Line which had been ploughing the seas between New York and Venezuela for thirty years. She was still in excellent condition but I still marvel in these days of comfortable cabins and luxurious lounging rooms that people should have put up with the small staterooms and uncomfortable saloons of this steamer. Two days out of New York we were enjoying a quiet semitropical sea and a balmy caressing wind which I had never before experienced. The men appeared in whites and the women in the thinnest of summer dresses. The captain of the Caracas, Captain Hitchborn, was one of the finest looking men whom I have ever seen and he was a splendid figure in his white uniform. During that trip we formed a friendship which has continued to this day and during the years that we were to remain at Curacao the arrival of this ship and her master was to be one of the leading events during each month.

After touching at San Juan, Porto Rico, where we spent a day, our prow was turned directly towards Curacao and on the third morning very early we were awakened by a great crowing of roosters. Looking through the door of our stateroom which opened directly upon the deck, and which of course had to be kept open in these tropical seas, we saw in the near distance the low barren hills which are the characteristic feature of the Curacao landscape. I hurried into my clothes and by the time I was able to go on
deck the ship was already entering the narrow inlet which leads to the excellent harbor of Curacao. On the right was the grim outline of a fort, and near it a very attractive building which we were to learn so well afterwards -- the Governor's palace -- and on the left the Americano Hotel known to all travelers to the Caribbean countries. Immediately in front a long bridge, which extended across the width of the harbor, was slowly opening to make way for our ship. Both sides of the narrow entrance were lined with buildings of rather extraordinary architecture, a combination of Spanish and Dutch, which we were afterwards to become so familiar with in the Flemish cities of Belgium and particularly in Middelburg, in Holland. The houses were painted in bright colors, reds and blues, and in that early morning light the picture presented by the harbor was an unforgettable one. I wish I had the power in the use of words to paint this picture. Now that the Caribbean tour is almost as popular as the Mediterranean cruise in winter, many people are familiar with this curious, unique and thoroughly attractive picture of Curacao in the early morning. By the time that our ship had tied up at the Red D dock, a huge crowd of natives, men, women and children, had already gathered and by the time that we were able to get off the ship the sunlight was already so strong as to give us a preliminary idea of what the tropical sun could do.

We were met by the vice consul, Mr. Gorsira, who was a prominent Dutch merchant of the
colony and who for years had acted as honorary vice consul. He was temporarily in charge of the consulate and immediately piloted us to the Americano Hotel which he stated was the only one on the island in which an American should be happy. We were ushered into a long narrow room which was to serve as our home for several months, and it seemed to us more like the cell of an ascetic rather than a hotel room. The walls were absolutely bare of pictures or adornment and were calculated a light blue. The floor was of plain pine boards and there was not a vestige of any floor covering of any kind. There were no curtains at the windows but the sun could be kept out by the lattice shutters. The furniture was of the most simple character. The room however had the virtue of being immaculately clean. We naively asked whether a room with a bath would not be available and brought out the information that there was only one bath on each of the three floors of the hotel. When we investigated this arrangement we found that it was a shower bath of the most primitive character and merely consisted of a tin receptacle with very tiny holes punched in the bottom. Taking a bath was a ceremony and when one asked for a bath and paid the necessary twenty Dutch cents for a bucket of water, it was poured into the receptacle. Anyone who had the temerity to ask for a second bucket of water, even though he was willing to pay liberally for it, was frowned upon and was immediately put down as an American. We were to learn that water was one of the greatest luxuries on the island.
and that it was an article to be used sparingly and with the greatest discretion. Neither of us particularly cared for this bathing arrangement and we decided to revert to the habits of pre-bathtub days in America. As a morning and evening bath were not only a delight but a necessity in this climate it was a decided relief in this respect when we were able to leave the hotel for our first home where we had an ample supply of water for our own use.

Within a few hours after landing I made my first visit to the consulate which we found located in three rooms on the ground floor of the same hotel, and my heart literally sank when I first went through the door. On entering the consulate that morning we were greeted by a Dutch clerk who peered through the lenses of his thick spectacles at the new boss. I think there was a good deal of speculation in that look. He exuded the odor and aroma of gin and it seemed to permeate the whole outer office. I also made the acquaintance of the messenger, the only other employee of the consulate, who was introduced as the "boy who does the errands", but he must have been at least forty years of age and limped most painfully in one leg. The only comforting thing about him was that he did not seem to exude the same aroma of gin. The badly arranged office, the smelling clerk, and the limping messenger were rather disillusioning and I proceeded with the inspection of the rest of the office with rather a heavy heart. I found that the whole place was dirty, almost bare, and certainly neglected. The furniture
was arranged with no order and had not in the least the aspect which should be presented by a consulate. The room which was to be my own office I knew I could not work in until it had been transformed.

My first days at Curacao in the consulate were a repetition of those at Fort Erie. I arranged that several native workmen and several women should be on hand and should consider themselves definitely engaged until I was through with them. They were on the scene when I appeared the next morning. We cleaned the house for at least four days and to the horror and consternation of the clerk and messenger and of the vice consul the "we" was literally correct.

I had paid my official calls before starting on this house-cleaning process which I learned afterwards was a great mistake. Curacao is a small community and the American Consul is in many respects the busiest and probably the most important consular officer stationed on the island. My callers therefore began to appear while the office was in this state of disorder and my own personal appearance was such as not to befit the position which I was supposed to hold. I apologized as best I could for my appearance and determined to make up for a bad beginning later, but I have often thought that the impression which I made on the natives of Curacao during the first week there must have been a curious one. I had to put my hand to the wheel for although some of the negroes seemed to understand a bit of English it did not seem possible for them to realize that the place was really to be
cleaned and that when I said a thing was to be done a certain way that it was really to be done that way and not after their own way of thinking. Suffice it to say that at the end of the first week Curacao saw the American Consulate looking like a different place and the consul with clean face and hands and in an immaculate suit of whites was properly installed in due dignity at his desk prepared to receive with the necessary ceremony according to local customs the dignitaries who began to stream in in larger numbers.

I often think that those of us who suffer from this sense of order make ourselves a nuisance not only to ourselves but to others. When I go to a new post I have never been able to get over the house-cleaning habit and it is impossible for me to do anything like really serious and constructive work until I can have the intimate feeling that the surroundings at least are clean, that the place looks like a business establishment, and that there is some order in the archives. I like to think that it is the only way in which I have allowed my temperament to get into my work, but so far as Fort Erie and Curacao and later Antwerp were concerned this display of temperament I believe was quite necessary towards expediting the future conduct of our public business during my stay at those posts.

The next thing was to get settled in a comfortable house as we early learned that life in the hotel would be impossible for any considerable length of time. This was
no easy task for although there were a considerable number of good houses in the town of Willemstad they were all occupied by their owners, wealthy merchants and business men of the community. It was only after the greatest difficulty that we succeeded in getting for a period of six months a house which was being reserved for a Dutch pathologist who was coming out from Holland to organize the sanitary service for the colony. It was situated in Scharloo, the most attractive part of the city and was surrounded by attractive grounds. The rooms were large and the place was well kept and with the furniture which we were able to buy comparatively reasonably locally we were able to make the place comfortable. We had brought with us nothing but our linen and silver and those intimate things which one scatters around the home to make it a liveable place. In spite of the fact that we had brought so little with us, the transfer from Fort Erie to Curacao had cost me about $800, while if I remember correctly of this sum the Government only reimbursed me about $200. This was a serious drain on our resources at the time but the experience was a common one in the Service and one that had to be accepted as a part of it.

We soon found that we had many things to learn for although we had considered ourselves experienced housekeepers, life in the tropics was a very different thing from anything we had before experienced. At Fort Erie we sometimes awakened in the morning to find the snow had blown in through the open windows and covered the bedclothing almost up to one's chin, but we soon learned to accommodate ourselves to the
raw winds from the Great Lakes and to the below zero temperature of Canada for months during the winter. It was comparatively easy to accommodate ourselves to the broiling tropical sun of Curacao because it was largely a question of clothing.

While Curacao has practically no rain except during about six weeks of the year and there are consequently few of the tropical insects which make life so difficult in these regions, there was no lack of mosquitoes. We found it rather difficult and annoying to eat a meal to the constant disturbance of an army of mosquitoes which constantly attacked one's legs. It seemed to be a peculiarity of the Curacao mosquito that it attacked you below the waist and it was at the table that they massed their attacks. Our Curacao friends reassured us that we would soon be accustomed to them and would not notice them, but although we had considerable confidence in their knowledge of their surroundings, it was somewhat difficult to believe that we could accommodate ourselves to this situation. We therefore resorted to the building of a smudge of charcoal in a brazier under the table. This was always put there a few minutes before we sat down to a meal and the smoke was sufficient to drive away the insects. It was difficult to determine for a while whether the acrid smoke or the mosquitoes were the worst nuisance, and we had arrived at no definite conclusion on that subject when we left the house in which we were living to go into another where we were fortunately able to get rid of this nuisance.
Our vice consul at Curacao, Mr. Gorsira, was a Dutch subject born in Curacao and at that time he was about forty-five years of age. Although he had spent practically his entire life on the little island, he had traveled both in America and Europe and was a man of unusual capacity and intelligence. He was the agent at Curacao for the Italian steamship line Le Veloche, the steamers of which called at Willemstad about every two weeks and carried considerable freight from Curacao to Italian ports. He had a thorough knowledge of all that went on in the island and was one of its leading citizens. His business kept him in close touch with what was going on in Columbia and Venezuela as well as in some of the Central American States. The Curacao merchants as a rule were a very intelligent, shrewd and well-informed lot of men, but even among them he stood out prominently. He was a sincere admirer of the United States and of things American, and he consented to serve as honorary vice consul of our Government because of this attachment to our institutions and also because of the practice which exists in so many South American as well as European countries of businessmen seeking honorary consular appointment. The only duty of our honorary vice consul was to act during the absence or illness of the career officer, but during the period of the war he was to render many valuable and unusual services to our Government, and the vast amount of knowledge which he had of that region he placed unreservedly at our disposal. From the very first day of our arrival in Curacao he took us under his wing and made our first days very much pleasanter and happier, in fact
our whole stay on the island, than they would otherwise have been.

It was through him that it was possible for me to learn almost from the very beginning of my stay why I had been sent to Curacao. In Venezuela and Colombia the ranges of the Andes dropped abruptly into the sea and between these ranges there are rivers flowing into the Caribbean, mostly small rivers and navigable only for very small vessels. At the mouth of each of them a small port had grown up. The height of these mountains made the building of transverse railroads a serious engineering problem and the cost of construction almost prohibitive, at least until the country became more densely settled. With practically one exception all the railroads follow the mountains rather than crossing them. The obvious result of the topography of the country is that travel and merchandise must follow the rivers to the sea and transportation is still very largely done by water. The building of railways across the mountains of Venezuela has been no expensive that it has hardly yet even been contemplated, and persons proceeding from Maracaibo to Caracas, the capital, must go by water, usually going by steamer from Maracaibo to Curacao and then from Curacao to La Guaira, from which a railroad extends to Caracas in the mountains.

In this connection I remember very distinctly seeing one day about a week before the opening of the Venezuelan congress the dining room of the Hotel Americano filled with swarthy Venezuelans. On inquiry I found that they
were the members of the Venezuelan Congress from the western part of the country and that they had arrived at Curacao en route to Caracas, the capital. They had embarked on the little steamer Merida and were proceeding that afternoon by another steamer to La Guaira. It seemed rather extraordinary that the members of the congress should have to leave their own territory to proceed to the capital, but the extraordinary sight which I witnessed in the dining room of the Americano that day seemed even more unusual. That recollection of forty members of the Venezuelan Congress dispatching their noon-day meal is one that I shall not soon forget.

One of the principal table accessories in Curacao is a steel blade knife with practically a razor edge on both sides of the blade. This is used for every course from the first to the last and jealously guarded by the diner throughout the meal, who uses it not only for cutting his food but for conveying it to his mouth. To see forty of these mustached and dusky gentlemen industriously wielding these double-edged weapons made me fear that there would be some split cheeks or split tongues before the meal was over. But long practice had evidently made them so handy in the use of these deadly instruments that there were no casualties whatever. At the end of the meal, with a unanimity that was most striking, every diner armed himself with a toothpick and when I saw the industrious manner in which they employed these articles I realized that here lay one of the reasons why the problem of forest conservation might eventually become as serious in the southern continent as it was already on
our own.

The majority of these ports in Venezuela and Colombia are small and serve only a very small area and the harbor of most of them is not sufficiently sheltered nor does it have sufficient depth to receive ocean-going vessels of any considerable tonnage. Ocean-going vessels therefore in the trade with North America and Europe can therefore not call at these ports with advantage. Communication between these small ports by sailing vessels is also difficult in view of the fact that the trade winds blow continuously in that part of the world. It is easy enough for the sailing vessels to go in one direction but the return voyage may take them as much as two weeks when the outward trip between the two ports may have taken only two days. All these natural conditions working to the disadvantage of the ports of Venezuela and Colombia have worked to the advantage of Curacao which is located in such a way that the prevailing winds fill the sails of the small sloops in either direction.

Curacao though in itself unproductive and with little trade of its own has become one of the great marts of the western hemisphere. The harbor is magnificent and is excelled only in the West Indies by that of St. Thomas. It has become the clearing-house for the imports and exports of these two immensely rich countries, and the cocoa, divi-divi, sugar, coffee, hides and skins, and other tropical products which they produce in great quantities are brought in small schooners to Curacao where they are placed in huge warehouses awaiting the ar-
rival of ocean-going steamers. In a similar manner to a very considerable extent the exports of the United States and Europe to these two countries are unloaded at Curacao and distributed from there to Venezuela and Colombia, being carried as return cargo by these schooners. Curacao furthermore is in the direct line of ships passing from Europe to the Panama Canal and is a convenient coaling station for these vessels. Willemstad has therefore become although under Dutch control a great international port which is known to practically all sea-faring men as sometime or other in their wanderings they touch this port. These are some of the reasons why every merchant in Venezuela and Colombia is as familiar with Curacao as he is with his own country.

The Venezuelans and Colombians were as a rule more interested in producing sugar and coffee and hides and skins and other tropical products rather than in marketing them, and the Germans had for many years taken advantage of this situation and established themselves firmly in both countries. Through the course of the years they had established trading firms which bought the tropical produce from the natives and supplied them in return with European goods. These firms became very powerful and in many cases very rich. Through the extension which they naturally gave to their operations they had gradually acquired what amounted to a stranglehold on both the export and import of both countries. Due to the improvidence of a considerable number of the planters it was almost inevitable that they should fall into the hands of these firms.
The planting and cultivation of many of the tropical crops requires the expenditure of a good deal of money and as most of the plantations are very large, a certain amount of capital is required. A coffee planter for example may be in need before he can gather in the crop of a fair amount of money for machinery or for payment of wages and his natural appeal is to the exporting firm which usually buys his crop. These firms lent him the money at a more or less fair rate of interest and the loan was repaid out of the proceeds of the sale of the crop. As time went on the majority of the planters were constantly in the debt of these firms which developed in most cases a very extensive banking interest. As their hold became stronger their terms became harder and in 1914 the situation was a difficult one for the planters. When a planter approached a firm for money to finance his crop it was customary for the exporting firm to require him to sign a contract that he would sell his entire crop to the firm and also buy from it everything that he might need for the conduct of his plantation. This placed the planter entirely at the mercy of these firms who paid him what they wanted for his crop and charged him what they might please for the machinery and merchandise which he bought. The planter naturally not only secured from them the money which he needed for his labor, but also in many cases purchased considerable quantities of machinery as well as the hats and the gowns for his family from Paris. In some instances these firms deliberately encouraged the spendthrift expenditures of the planters and their extravagances in order to
fasten their hold upon them. At the out-
break of the war it may be said therefore
without exaggeration that almost the entire
import and export trade as well as the
banking of Venezuela and Columbia was con-
trolled by the Germans. In spite of the
hard practices indulged in by these firms
it cannot be said that the Germans were un-
popular for in most cases the chiefs of the
firms had established themselves permanently
in the country, in many instances married
Venezuelans, and in practically every case
identified themselves closely with the life
of the country although preserving their
German nationality and allegiance. All
these circumstances had a very important
bearing on certain events which were to
follow after the outbreak of the war.

Hardly had the war started when the
British issued their so-called blockade orders
and blacklists. All these were exceptionally
complete and effective as they were thoroughly
experienced in methods of blockade and inter-
fering with enemy trade. All the German firms
in Venezuela and Colombia were naturally im-
mediately placed upon these blacklists and
every neutral firm was exceedingly anxious to
keep its name off these lists in order to be
able to continue to trade. Once on the list
it was practically impossible to carry on any
operations in foreign trade and almost impossible
to get off the list.

From the very beginning the Dutch mer-
chants in Holland had found it particularly
difficult to continue their trading operations
on account of their proximity to Germany and
their close relationship with firms in that country. This proximity as well as the use which Germany had made of the ports of Amsterdam and Rotterdam, particularly of the latter, made the English very suspicious of all shipments proceeding to Holland as they feared that such vital produce as leather, hides, skins, coffee, rubber, and other materials would reach the enemy from Holland. In order to prevent a complete paralysis of the Dutch foreign trade and in order that Holland might continue to receive the goods which she needed for her own use and for her industry, with the cooperation of the British the so-called Netherlands Oversea Trust was organized. This Trust agreed and solemnly undertook that all goods directed to it were not to be reexported but were to be consumed in Holland. Because of this undertaking by the Trust the British authorities agreed to let goods consigned to the Trust proceed.

As Curacao was a Dutch colony and trade between it and Rotterdam and Amsterdam quite heavy and carried by regular steamers of Dutch lines, it became necessary to control this trade. The British consul at Curacao was required to certify the manifests of all steamers leaving for Holland and he was not supposed to certify a manifest unless he was satisfied that no enemy-owned goods or goods with enemy destination were on board. In order to properly exercise his functions it was of course necessary for the British Consul to be au courant with the situation not only in Curacao but in Venezuela and Colombia as well. No sooner had the war started and the enemy
trading regulations put into effect than the results began to be felt and the German firms transferred many of their interests in the foreign trade to small Venezuelan and Colombian firms which immediately assumed unusual importance. Shipments which were made by these firms were undoubtedly for enemy account but it was difficult to trace them in view of the fact that they were made by so-called neutral firms. Everyone familiar with tropical trade knows that every shipper has his own mark which usually consists of his initials together with some descriptive mark such as a triangle, a rectangle, or some other symbol. For one familiar with the trade in a certain region it is therefore a simple matter to tell the ownership of cargo from these descriptive marks on the bags or goods.

It has already been brought out that the majority of the Venezuelan and Colombian produce was brought to Curacao for warehousing and was transshipped from these warehouses to the steamers in the trade with Europe or the United States. It was therefore a comparatively easy matter in these warehouses to resack the goods or to change the markings in such a way as to make impossible the recognition of origin once the goods reappeared on the dock from the warehouse.

By the time that we arrived in Curacao the war had been going on for several years and a good many tricks had been learned by neutral merchants in their efforts to avoid the operations of the blockade and the blacklists. I had the firm conviction that we would not be
able to stay out of the war very much longer and that it was my business therefore to familiarise myself with the possibility of local proceedings in this connection which might be taking place at Curacao. I immediately set myself to studying this problem but it would have been hopeless task had it not been for the assistance of the vice consul, Mr. Gorsira. The knowledge which he had gained as agent of the La Veloche which carried considerable quantities of cargo, and which he had secured through his long residence on the island, he placed at my disposal and he made certain concrete suggestions which made it possible for our consulate to get into very close touch with what was actually going on. I soon learned that large quantities of enemy-owned goods were leaving Curacao for European destination and the undoubted ultimate destination was Germany.

My British colleague had evidently not gone into the matter as thoroughly as he should have for he was certifying manifests and sending long cables to his government to the effect that certain cargo contained no enemy interest when as a matter of fact such interest did exist. I had the unfortunate experience of more than once meeting him at the French cable office at four o'clock in the afternoon where we both went at the same time in order to get the news concerning the war which usually came over the cable at that time. On those occasions he would file long cablegrams concerning the departure of a certain steamer and give assurance as to the neutral character of the cargo when to my knowledge I knew that the information he was
transmitting was incorrect. I longed to tell him what the actual situation was but my predecessor at Curacao had taken such an unneutral attitude in favor of Germany and the effect of it had been so undesirable that I felt that I must at all events and at all costs preserve a proper attitude and more particularly as I was convinced that within a comparatively few weeks we would be in the war ourselves.

Within two weeks after I had arrived at Curacao I therefore had a fairly good idea as to why I had been sent to this post and I realized what Mr. Carr had in mind when he told me that if I did not soon realize why I had been sent to Curacao I was not the man they believed and hoped I was. It has always been a very popular thing at home to abuse our State Department on the ground that it is behind the times, that it is inefficient, and even that it is badly informed, but my experience has been that the Department generally knows what it is doing. In this instance it evidently knew what was taking place at Curacao, even though it was not our specific business at the time. It knew what was going on better than the British Government and the British Consul, for whom what was going on was a very vital matter. I took a new interest in my assignment to this little island when I realized all this and when I felt that I had a specific task to do and that I would have at least some possibility of doing something for my country in the struggle which was to come. I have often felt that it is extremely unfortunate that the State Department cannot use the news-
papers and other means of publicity to let the country know at least to some extent what it is doing every day in every part of the world to protect the interests of our Government and of our people.

Realizing what my problem was, I set myself to gaining the definite information which would enable me to stop these enemy trading operations as soon as we would get into the war. It was evident that with the declaration of war we would put into effect regulations similar to those already issued by the British, French, and Italian Governments. The problem seemed a very difficult one and even in small places like Curacao it presented almost insuperable difficulties. Practically every day of the week anywhere from twenty to thirty schooners arrived from West Indian, Venezuelan, or Colombian ports. The cargo brought by each schooner was small and was immediately engulfed in one of the huge warehouses, and once in these warehouses it was naturally difficult to determine what happened. When a steamer arrived to be loaded for European destination the goods issued from these warehouses in huge lots rather than in the small lots in which they had entered. It became evident from the very beginning that in order to determine whether the goods arriving in Curacao contained enemy interest or not, it would be necessary to watch the cargo of every incoming schooner and such watching would be useless if we did not know the marks and numbers on every package so as to identify the owners.

There were several ways in which this
information could be gathered, the easiest of course being the securing of a copy of the manifest of every schooner. Such a manifest was furnished to the Dutch customs at Curacao but it was of course impossible for me to ask the customs for copies. They could not have properly furnished such copies even if they so desired. The other procedure, more difficult but equally effective, would be to watch the unloading of every schooner and have a record kept of marks and numbers and quantities of all merchandise unloaded and placed in the warehouses. This was by no means impracticable as it was possible to get men whose activities would not be suspected and who could gather this information. Even at this time I do not care to say how I secured the information but I may say that at the end of every day after my first month in Curacao I was securing a complete statement of the cargo that had arrived by every schooner, with its marks and numbers and with the indication as to the warehouse in which it was placed. I should also say that for this work I had not one penny from our Government and that I purchased not one shred of information. I would not have hesitated to purchase it had it been necessary but ways and means were found to secure it without resorting to this.

But this was only the beginning of the task because indications as to quantities and marks and numbers meant nothing until we could interpret these marks into terms of names of shippers or owners, and then it still meant nothing until we knew who the actual shippers and owners were and what their affiliations were.
We built up very rapidly at the consulate a very complete dictionary and after it was once started it was very easy for us to tell whether the goods which had arrived on a particular schooner were enemy-owned or not. We soon learned however that when these same goods were loaded into the steamer from the warehouse, the same bags apparently did not come out of the warehouse which had gone into it. If we exercised a certain amount of cleverness, the firms endeavoring to contravent the regulations were not idle. Marks and numbers were changed in the warehouse so it was no longer possible to determine from them the real origin of the goods. As we however kept a record of the marks and numbers of the goods which had gone in the particular warehouses for the account of various firms, it was evident that the goods which came out of these warehouses and which were loaded for Europe had to be the same merchandise, whether the bags or the marks were the same.

To facilitate our task I began a system of card indexes for each firm handling shipments for their own account and for others and before long I had a startling exhibit which clearly showed that firms professing the deepest sympathy with the allied cause were acting as the intermediary at Curacao for hiding the identity of enemy-owned goods. By the time that we entered the war our confidential index was quite complete and was an accurate and fairly complete record of the transactions of these firms.

Shortly after war was declared by the United
States we issued as could easily have been foreseen enemy trading regulations on the general lines of those already put in effect by the Allies, with the exception however that ours were far more concrete and practical and therefore more effective. As soon as the text of these regulations reached me I put into my pocket the small but precious bundle of index cards and proceeded to make a round of calls that proved to be the sensation of the war on the little island. I would call on the head of a firm and after the exchange of the usual courtesies would proceed to state that my hearer was familiar with the fact that we had now entered the war. This was received with profuse expressions of happiness that we had done so as this was an assurance that the war would now be rapidly ended and in the right way. I would express appreciation of these sentiments and would then carefully explain that we had enemy trading regulations which were practically similar to those which had already been put in effect by the Allies. My explanation of these regulations would invariably be cut short by the response that they were thoroughly understood and that they had been following them and that they would not think of doing otherwise than follow them to the last letter. I was usually met by the statement that although the firm was a very good friend of the French and English, they were very much better friends with the United States and would not think of anything but the most strict adhesion now even if they had not already followed the allied regulations. I did not fail to express due appreciation of these assurances and after a bit of general conversation would make it plain that our
regulations were a little different from the others in one respect only, but that this was rather an important difference and it lay in the fact that we were going to see that they were strictly enforced. This remark would bring an expression of surprise and apparent bewilderment and I would then carefully get out my package of index cards from which I would rather ostentatiously sort out one. I was careful to let them see the size of the package of cards. From the one which I would select I would then read out their firm name and then recite chapter and verse shipments which I knew had been made by them for enemy account. The look of surprise and utter bewilderment which was the response was more than sufficient recompense for all the hard labor which had been put into this work. Of course there were protests and in some cases absolute denials, but I waived these aside with the statement that it was best not to consider what had happened before for, as far as my country was concerned, what had happened before we entered into the war could have no legal effect in putting firms on the blacklist. I made it clear however that from the date of this visit whatever shipments they might make for enemy account would go on the same little card and would immediately be telegraphed to Washington and that the immediate effect would be to have the firm placed on the blacklist.

I went from firm to firm with my package of cards and at the end of two days had completed the round of visits. They had literally upset the entire business community and I was
probably the most hated man in that part of the world, although this hate was, as I afterwards learned, mingled with a certain amount of respect. Even to the time of my departure these firms were unable to determine how I had secured such accurate and such complete information. Strict enforcement of the regulations by our Government was bound to cause serious financial losses, in some cases amounting to millions, and I was warned by some of my friends that my own life might not be too safe. I admit that during the first days I was somewhat nervous but dangers began to accumulate and I soon learned to disregard them entirely.

Most of the traders at Curacao were friendly towards things American. Through the means at my disposal I made it known that while I should dislike very much to destroy the business of any man I would be absolutely heartless in any question involving enemy trade. I let it be known that all the produce which before had been sold to Germany or to her allies could be sold to our own country or to the Allies and that the same legitimate profits could be made in business with the Allies as with Germany. We made it clear that trading with the enemy would be considered as an enemy act and as a direct evidence of sympathy with the enemy. I think it was the absolute consternation that was caused by my rather accurate little bundle of cards rather than anything else which did the trick for while for almost two and a half years we kept up the same careful check of all incoming and outgoing shipments we did not
have to place a single Curacao firm on the blacklist except one out and out German firm actually doing business in the city which of course went on the list automatically. I am quite sure however that I was watched just as carefully by some as I was watching them and that it was the constant vigilance which we exercised which prevented any breaches of faith. When I left Curacao there were hundreds of thousands of bags of enemy-owned merchandise in warehouses which had been there for varying periods and each of which was undoubtedly finally worthless through deterioration, principally the cocoa. I was undoubtedly the cause of considerable losses to many people but I had the satisfaction of knowing that the losses were enemy losses and I do not think I caused the loss of a dollar to a single honest neutral trader. Those who suffered were either Germans or German firms or firms which were deliberately taking the risk of selling German-owned goods on account of German firms in Venezuela and Colombia for which they were well paid. The losses of these latter therefore were not actual losses in money but rather losses of the huge profits which they would otherwise have made.