

USA

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place is, more specifically, Times Square. Bowen has made the sleazy, submerged, seldom-glimpsed under-world of Times Square peculiarly his own. Here he is at his best. Only in the piece "Times Square Kid" does he completely succeed in creating his characters' milieu. And his brittle, jerky, nervous prose is peculiarly suited to describing the life of Times Square.

BOWEN works very close to the events he describes. That is, he attends the trial of his criminal, does not come along a year or so later and work from the transcript of testimony. Bowen's facts are hot off the street. Thus his pieces have the great impact of immediacy (and at the same time they lack perspective). This is dead-pan reporting, done at close range and set down in highly kinetic style.

Bowen's preference is for the ordinary, not the celebrated. For the most part he works on men whose crimes attract little attention in the daily press. Thus he sets himself a difficult task. When Bowen succeeds with the ordinary, he succeeds spectacularly, for somehow we feel that he has plucked an individual human out of the faceless restless mass in the great city and held him up wriggling for all to marvel at for, lo, he is not ordinary at all. Sometimes, on the other hand, Bowen succeeds less well, and then the ordinary becomes nothing more than ordinary, and not very interesting. Thus the case of Robert Brown scarcely seems worth all the trouble Bowen has taken, unless one accepts the arguable theory of the "psychiatrists that Brown's was a "flight into custody." Again, the last chapter presents far and away the best description I have ever read of how a man feels upon unexpectedly getting out of prison; but beyond that there is nothing, the story gets nowhere, it ends where it began, there was really less here than met the eye.

The excellence of Bowen's deadpan style is shown best in "The Brutal Cop." I have read no story more terrifying. A young man talked back to a cop in Times Square, and the cop beat him mercilessly. That is all; but Bowen, telling it with a fine calm, makes us smell the station house and feel the crunch of bone. He has chosen not to manipulate the story skilfully—not, for example, to make more of the cop and to drop his background in early so he comes alive—but merely

to let the facts transpire in an almost stubbornly clumsy way; and their impact is enormous.

Bowen's dogged endless fascination by fact is his great strength. It is his weakness, too. Sometimes his facts are telling, sometimes irrelevant. In doing legwork he uses the vacuum-cleaner method, collecting everything—and he puts it all in. He cannot, apparently, bear to cut. Thus when the piece "Time Square Kid" appeared in *The New Yorker* a few years ago and subsequently in a collection of pieces by St. Clair McKelway (who apparently edited the piece), it was considerably shorter and tighter than it is here.

But although the writing in this book occasionally bogs down in detail, at its best it is journalism raised to its highest power. In the sordid files of the welfare agencies, courts, and police stations resides a great deal of the history of our sordid times. This is one of the best books to come out of the files in a long time.

Colonial Smokes

CHESAPEAKE BAY PIONEERS: "This inland sea—the Mediterranean of America . . . was the principal factor in the development of Virginia and Maryland." These words are the theme which is expanded in 350 pages of scholarly, but not dull or pedantic, treatment in Arthur Pierce Middleton's "Tobacco Coast: A History of Chesapeake Bay in the Colonial Era" (Mariners' Museum, \$5).

Mr. Middleton is not primarily interested in tobacco as a crop. His concern is with its place in the commerce of the eighteenth century and the problems resulting from the determination in the colonies and England to promote and safeguard the tobacco trade. The period from about 1660 to 1763 receives the greater notice.

During the wars of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, whose stakes included colonial empires, the Chesapeake people were in frequent danger, and more frequent apprehension, of attack from the Spanish, the Dutch, the French, or pirates. As early as 1667 a British vessel was dispatched to the Bay to protect its shipping, and after 1684 there was normally a royal warship on guard.

From a variety of sources, to which he makes many citations, Mr. Middleton has gone far toward his objective of discussing "every aspect of the maritime history of colonial Virginia and Maryland," and he perhaps is too modest when he says that he claims no literary merit for his work.

—WILL D. GILLIAM, JR.

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I must admit that I find all these endeavors a perfectly attractive way of escaping the winter of reality as well as the winter of New York. There is, let's face it, a great and warming pleasure in playing for a day, a sort of truant Alec Guinness sprung from the clerk's bench by some devious chicanery and catapulted within an hour's flying time into a civilization where even the palms are debonair.

This whole concept of escape and transference must have lately become obvious to a horde of citizens from the nearby USA, for Nassau has never before recorded the number of visitors now flooding in here. There were 10,000 paying guests on the grounds during January, and it looks like the house count for the year is going to total about 100,000, which is to say about a quarter of the number of Americans who currently go to Europe. Moreover, like Miami, business has ceased to be a seasonal occupation. Nobody hibernates for the summer any more, because the place is full of two-weeks-with-pay employees down to spend a fortnight on the same acres where only the rich can come in winter.

Coming in July is a new 300-room hotel to be called the Emerald Beach. It is already well out of the ground on a seaside plot about five miles from town. While the arrival of a sizable new hotel hardly makes more ripple in Miami than the arrival of another convertible Cadillac bearing north-country license plates, it is powerful news down here. It is going to mean that the old houses desperately in need of a refurbishing—the Fort Montagu Beach is one—will either have to beautify or surrender to a subordinate position at a lower rate.

Nassau is also showing a prefer-

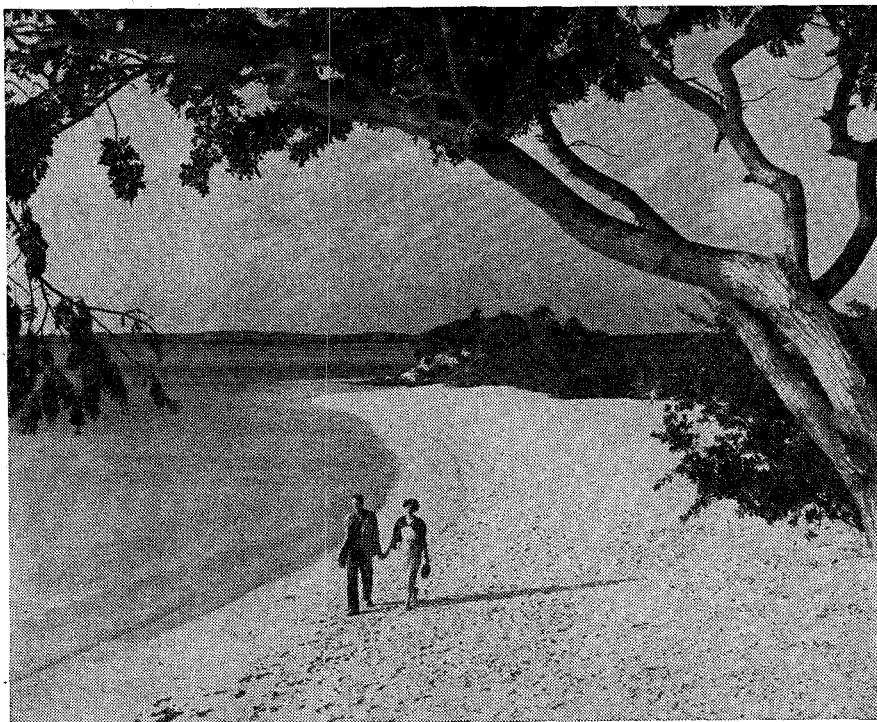
ence for developing colonies of small cottages rentable for almost any length of time, where one can keep light house if one desires. Usually there is a pool of servant help to draw upon, and it is not very expensive either. Such an establishment is the Nassau Racquet Club (it does have a tennis court) which has combination living-room, bedroom, and kitchen units and extracts \$18 a day in season for the layout. It has an inland location, but there is a swimming pool right on hand and nowhere on Nassau is very far from the beach. Should you tire of driving out for meals you can shop in the commissary, draw on the services of a maid to cook dinner at fifty cents an hour, a fee which also includes rassing breakfast together in the morning.

Palmdale Villas is a rather large estate sprinkled with cottages, palms, and deep white chairs, and has a wooden fence running all around to keep the little dears from rambling off the reservation. Its villas have two bedrooms, a living room, bath, and kitchen, a porch and a car shelter. The tariff here is \$26 a day for the villa from January 1 to March 31, \$6 less during the month of April, and \$12 a day from May 1 right through to the end of October. A

cook-maid can be added to your household at \$16 a week.

For those types who still prefer the at-your-elbow service and whatever advantages accrue from being in a big house, there is the aforementioned Fort Montagu Beach Hotel, which has a fine beach and facilities for water-skiing and boating. The big island bulwark is still the British Colonial, still owned by Lady Oakes, but perhaps not quite as starchy as it was in years gone by. Its grounds are exquisite, and a tremendous buffet lunch is served on the manicured lawn each day, looking out to the sea. The beach seems to wash away every fall, but it has been rebuilt again, and there are four permanent tennis courts which are tended by Lloyd Budge, who taught his brother Don how to play—and rather successfully, too.

I GUESS it is safe to say that the Royal Victoria is Nassau's oldest hotel. It was built in 1859, after fifteen years of plumping by the *Nassau Guardian*. Said the far-sighted editor, "At least five hundred invalids a year would spend the winter here, and the pecuniary advantage would benefit the whole community." The Royal Victoria did a booming business with the start of the American Civil War, and it was filled with Confederate officers arranging for ammunition, blockade runners, and Lancashire textile men trying to get cotton through to the English mills. The Cunard Line sent a steamer down from New York once a month (fare:



—Nassau-Bahamas Development Board.

"... nobody hibernates for the summer any more."