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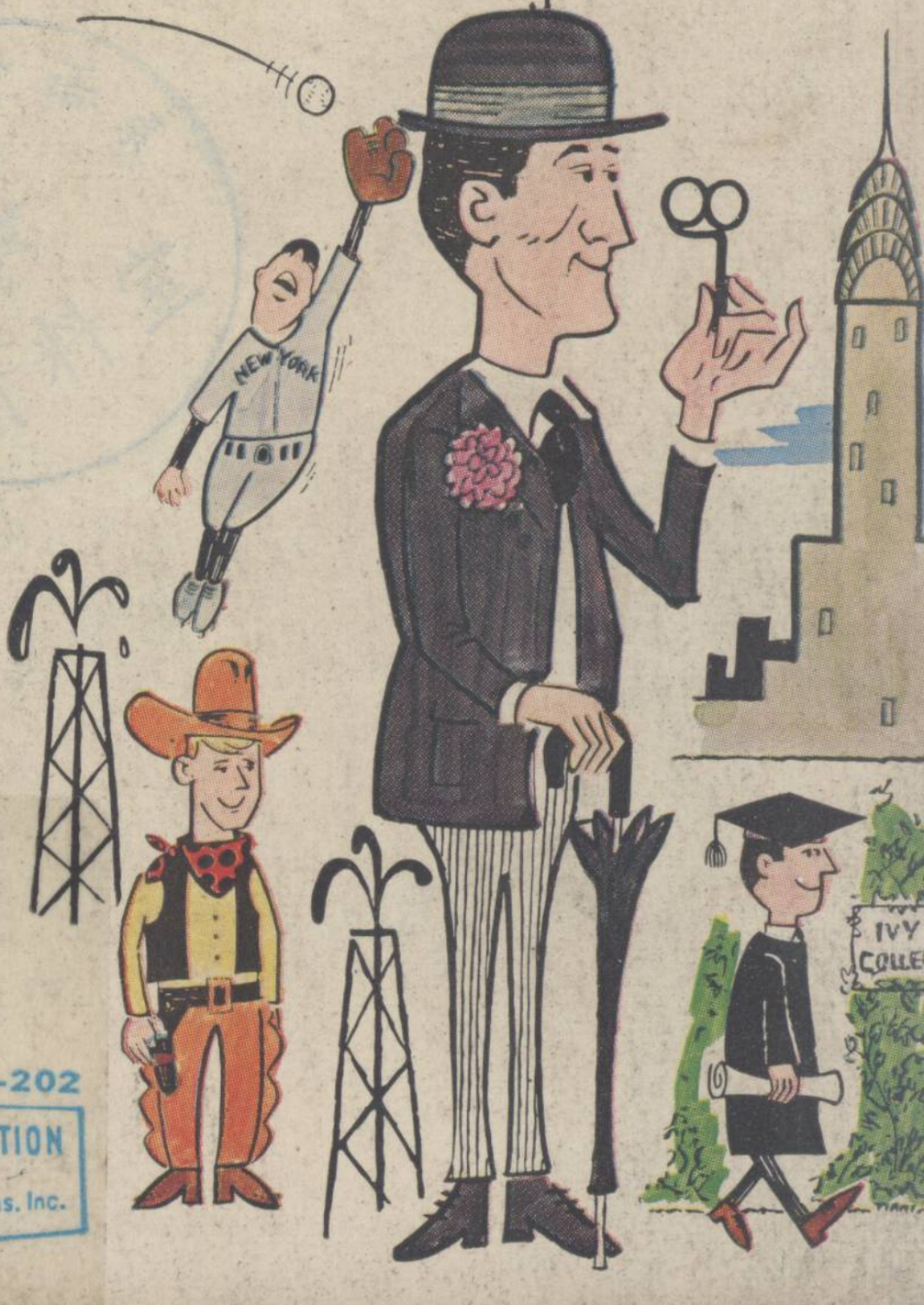
HELLO, NEW WORLD!

Hugh Willoughby

This enjoyable book about an Englishman's visit to America was first published under the title: AMID THE ALIEN CORN

英国文学



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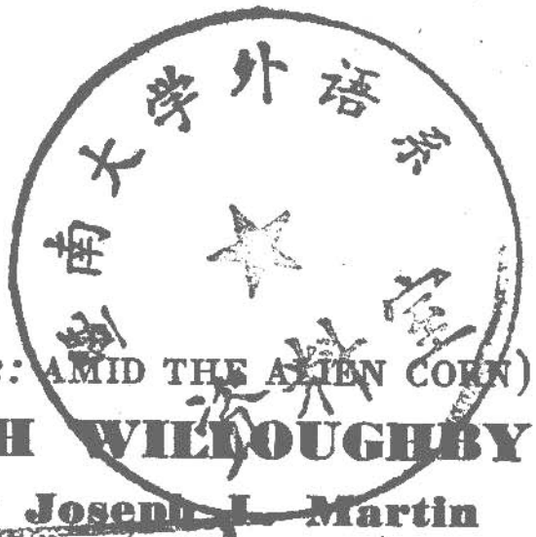
HELLO NEW WORLD!

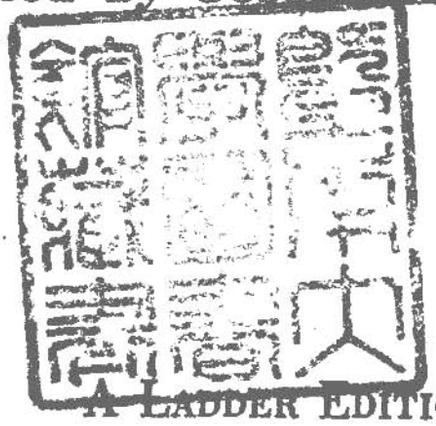
A Fearless Englishman in the Heart of America



(*Original title:* AMID THE ALIEN CORN)

BY HUGH WILLOUGHBY

edited by Joseph L. Martin



A LADDER EDITION

AT THE 1,000-WORD LEVEL

ADAPTED BY

AILEEN TRAVER KITCHIN

FAWCETT PUBLICATIONS, INC.
67 WEST 44th STREET, NEW YORK CITY

Ladder edition published September 1963

Also entered in the Library of Congress Catalog 58-9157

Printed in the United States of America

About The Writer

Hugh Willoughby is an English **agriculturist.** Although he is little more than 30 years old, he is already widely known in the field of farming. He is a **graduate** of Oxford, where he took his degree in history. He has written three books and numbers of articles. His wife, Bridget, is also a graduate of Oxford.

When Hugh Willoughby learned that he was going to spend a year as a graduate **student** in an American **university** in the Middle West, his friends asked him to send them an account of his experiences in the United States. And so he began making notes of what he saw and felt while the experiences were still fresh.

He later put these notes into letters to his friends at home in England. Written only for his friends, these letters are a record of his opinions of the United States and of its people. He had no thought that Americans would ever see the letters.

Most of us would like to know what people say about us when we are not listening. We often wish that we could become spirits without bodies so that we could move about without being seen, and hear what is said about us.

Without having become a spirit, the **editor** of these letters was able to learn what Mr. Willoughby was saying about us. It happened that a complete set of the letters was put into his hands. As an American, he was much interested by what Mr. Willoughby, an Englishman, had said to other Englishmen about America and Americans. He thought that other Americans might have an equal interest in Hugh

Willoughby's fresh look at America and in his opinions and feelings about what he saw.

With family and purely personal material left out, and with the letter form dropped in order to keep the story moving, Mr. Willoughby agreed to have his letters appear in book form.

Hello, New World! is the result. Now we can find out what an Englishman says about us Americans when we are not listening.

JOSEPH L. MARTIN
Editor

HELLO, NEW WORLD!

AUGUST, 1955

The Starting Point: London, England

I don't know very much about America. Like many other Englishmen, I have never been especially interested in America. Nobody I have met in the past few months has ever heard of the university to which I am going, and only a few have any idea where the state of Indiana is. If anyone asks, "Where is Indiana?" the usual reply is, "Oh, somewhere east of San Francisco and west of New York, I think. Probably south of Chicago. Somewhere out there, you know."

The little I know about America comes from a bit of reading (including Sinclair Lewis), the few Americans I have met, and, of course, the moving pictures. (NOTE: I do not include the reading and study I did when I learned I was going to America.)

From this I get a picture of a bigger-than-life England of the 16th century. Without doubt I will find a country with good men at the top. But the general public, I think, has little **political** understanding. **Administration** will be rather poor. There are many

very rich men in America; with America's natural riches and her free and open way of life, everyone believes, even though it may not be true, that anyone who is willing to work hard will be able to become rich himself.

Also, it seems that many Americans are so proud of their own part of the country that they do not understand or do not like the way people live and think in other parts of the country.

The most important part of America was settled by Englishmen who did not agree with the state Church in England. I expect, therefore, to find a strong **Puritan tradition** which by now has probably become nothing more than a belief in "doing good things" for other people.

I suppose that the American people always look on the bright side of things and believe that everything will turn out well. This is the result, I think, of their living so far away from the troubles of the rest of the world. They have never had to do any of the world's less pleasant work.

I also expect to find a very low kind of **culture** together with the childlike sort of **intellectual** interests that one finds in the *Reader's Digest* and in some stories.

All this is what I personally expect. More generally, in England there is a lot of opinion against America. Not bad feelings against America—nothing so deep and strong as that—but a belief that anything American is rather low, badly made, poorly finished, and not very pleasant. Nearly everything is far below European things.

No doubt part of the reason for Englishmen's poor opinion of America is political. Nobody can really see the good things about a person who has done a great many favors for him, especially when the person has done them very nicely. America may have acted in her

own interests, but she has acted well. And of course, the Americans are taking the place in the world that we held in the 19th century. Furthermore, nobody likes having foreign soldiers in his country in time of peace—above all when their being in England makes us remember our own weakness. And we don't really trust U.S. political judgment and experience, partly because it isn't British, partly because it is American.

When my countrymen talked to me about my going to America, it was clear that most of them shared these views. With good sense, they often said, "How wonderful that you are going to see something of the most powerful country in the world!" But they also told me that I should find the cultural life so low that America would not be at all pleasant, and that I would find an American university, *especially* a Middle-Western one, a poor thing after Oxford. I was told to speak well of our country, and to teach the Americans something about Britain. With deep feeling, they asked me not to become "too American." (This seemed to mean that I should not take on childlike intellectual interests or wear loud clothes, or get loud ideas.

I shall say nothing more of these views and poor opinions until I have seen America for myself—until I have gathered enough experience to know whether or not they are true. For the present, I simply record them. (AUGUST, 1956: I add this note after returning to England from my year in America. From the questions I am asked, now that I am at home again, I feel that this was—and still is—a rather reasonable account of general British opinion. How sad!)

Before we reach New York, I shall put all my opinions, and the opinions and views of my countrymen in a bag—with a great big stone to keep them company—and drop it into the ocean. I will start fresh

when we land and take everything as it appears at the time. What I was told in England was only what other people had heard and then told again. It doesn't prove anything about America at all.

SEPTEMBER, 1955

Arriving in New York was not so fearful an experience as either my wife, Bridget, or I had expected. I had been told that the people were in such a hurry that they hardly had time to be bad-mannered; but no. The rush was like the London rush, nothing more.

I saw New York simply as great mountains of matter. Great square machines for living and working are laid out side by side. There are no trees, no green spaces, no turning roads or surprise corners. But you do get open views at the ends of the deep valleys that lie between the great square machines.

We went up the Empire State Building. A lift takes you up 80 floors; then you have to change to a second lift. I have seen most of the great cities of Europe, but never anything like this before. It's not all skyscraper; but Manhattan is mostly so. When my father's father was in New York, about 1903, the Flatiron Building was the largest building in the

world. Now our guide pointed it out to us—about a thousand feet below—like a box on the floor.

After spending several delightful days in New York, Bridget and I traveled by train to the University of Indiana. It was a pleasant trip. We were not stopped by any twentieth-century **highwaymen.** We saw no **Indians.** And the nearest thing to **bison** were some **cattle.**

10 September 1955

The University, with big and beautiful buildings, covers a great deal of land. The school of **engineering** is one of the biggest, if not *the* biggest, in the world. In addition to its beautiful buildings, there is a **factory** with a great **chimney.** Lights are thrown on it at night, and it's a fine sight. The engineering students also have a train of their own to work with. The University is really like a complete city.

I speak of the buildings and the grounds. As yet, I have not seen anything of the intellectual side of the campus.

There are 12,000 students at this University, with a yearly intake of about 3,500 new students. The administration has to be good. It is.

You start the university year with an Entrance Week. You begin by coming together in the Hall of Music, which is the largest in the world, they said. The new students about half filled it. The meeting was opened by a man who was supposed to make us laugh and feel at home. And he did. He had us singing songs and asking the person next to us his name. Then he presented the **professors** by their first names: Al, Bill, Bert and Tom, and others. A band played light music and the student singing-club sang.

My mind raced off to the Colleges of Oxford, spent a quiet moment there and returned. This was foolish of me, of course. This entrance meeting was planned for farm boys who had never been away from home before. And they were a bit afraid of what must be one of the greatest experiences of their lives. They loved it and it did them a lot of good. It was well- and kindly-done.

Then people from the different churches of the town, about thirty in all, were presented to us; they asked us to parties they had planned for the new students. I went. We played games and sang songs and everybody was very friendly with everybody else. I had a wonderfully good time. All this may sound rather childlike, but it was not, at least not with these people.

Entrance includes a lot of other things besides parties. I filled in forms; I joined lines; I got various papers signed; I took forms and various papers first to this office and then to that office and then to another office. But it had to be done and it was very well done, too.

Later, we had another meeting in the Hall of Music. More bands, more singing. (This university is proud of its music. The student singing club has sung to Queen Mary and to President Eisenhower as well as to me.)

Then the President of the University spoke to us. He wore a plain suit, no fancy university dress of red or blue or gold. But suddenly the whole feeling of the meeting seemed to change. You knew that there were some really good minds behind all this. (Perhaps my feelings are showing a bit; the President *is* a graduate of Oxford.) He didn't say anything especially wonderful, but he said it well and truthfully, talking about study and what the University stands for. He had a few words especially for foreign students. He asked

us not to make judgments until we knew the background and causes of things.

17 September 1955

Bridget and I moved into a very pleasant place to live. It is like all the pictures in a woman's housekeeping book come to life. Electric **refrigerator,** built-in places to hang your clothes, washing machine and dryer—everything. After we settled down, we had a chance to meet some of the Americans. Friendly people, very pleasant.

They are also like something out of a picture book. Campus clothing is a rich and varied delight. Generally, the college men wear shirts so bright that the color alone is enough to keep you warm; and their other clothes are often brightly colored, too. The first-year men, called "freshmen," wear little green hats. The fourth-year men, "seniors," let the hair grow on their faces. It looks a bit like 16th-century England. I really like it.

I am dressing the way they do. The Americans don't seem to mind what you wear—they are pretty broad-minded about it really—but I feel that a suit and necktie would be looked upon as strange.

Very short hair, called a "crew cut," is the usual thing for men. It gives an air of strength and power—which, I rather think, is also in the best of 16th-century English traditions.

Americans are generally very good-looking, and above all, there are many pretty girls. But very few of them seem to get far beyond simple good looks. I look at them all with great pleasure, but I haven't seen a real beauty yet.

So far, I have found no bad feeling against the