

## IMMIGRATION AND LABOR PROBLEMS.

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Had it been left to the initiative of the emigrants the flow of immigration to America could scarcely ever have reached one half its actual dimensions. While various motives and inducements have always worked together and it would be rash to assert dogmatically the relative weight of each, yet to one who has carefully noted all the circumstances it is scarcely an exaggeration to say that even more important than the initiative of immigrants have been the efforts of Americans to bring and attract them. Throughout our history these efforts have been inspired by one grand, effective motive, that of making a profit upon the immigrants. The desire to get cheap labor, to take in passenger fares and to sell land have probably brought more immigrants than the hard conditions of Europe, Asia, and Africa have sent us. Induced immigration has been as potent as voluntary immigration. And it is to this pecuniary motive that we owe our manifold variety of races and especially our influx of backward races. One entire race, the negro, came solely for the profit of ship-owners and landowners. Working people of the colonial period were hoodwinked and kidnapped by shippers and speculators who reimbursed themselves by indenturing them to planters and farmers. The beginners of other races have come through similar but less coercive inducements, initiated, however, by the demand of those who held American property for speculation or investment. William Penn and his lessees, John Law, the Dutch East India company, and many of the grantees of lands in the colonies, sent their agents through western Europe and the British Isles with glowing advertise-

ments, advanced transportation, and contracted for indentured service by way of reimbursement. In the nineteenth century new forms of induced migration appeared. Victims of the Irish famine were assisted to emigrate by local and general governments and by philanthropic societies, and both the Irish and the Germans, whose migration began towards the middle of the century, were, in a measure, exceptions to the general rule of induced immigration for profit. Several western states created immigration bureaus which advertised their own advantages for intending immigrants, and Wisconsin especially, in this way, settled her lands with a wide variety of races. After the civil war, induced migration entered upon a vigorous revival. The system of indenturing had long since disappeared, because legislatures and courts declined to recognize and enforce contracts for service. Consequently, a new form of importation appeared under the direction of middlemen of the same nativity as that of the immigrant. Chinese coolies came under contract with the Six Companies, who advanced their expenses and looked to their own secret agents and tribunals to enforce repayment with profit. Japanese coolies, much later, came under contract with twelve immigration companies chartered by the Japanese government. Italians were recruited by the padroni, and the bulk of the new Slav immigration from southeastern Europe is in charge of their own countrymen acting as drummers and middlemen.

These labor speculators have perfected a system of inducement and through billing as effective as that by which horse and cattle buyers in Kentucky or Iowa collect and forward their living freight to the markets of Europe. A Croatian of the earlier immigration, for example, sets up a saloon in South Chicago and becomes an employment bureau for his greener countrymen, and also ticket agent on commission for the steamship companies. His confederates are stationed along the entire route at connecting points, from the villages of Croatia to the saloon in Chicago. In Croatia they go among the laborers and picture to them the high wages and abundant work in America. They induce them to sell their little belongings and they furnish them with

through tickets. They collect them in companies, give them a countersign and send them on to their fellow agent at Fiume, thence to Genoa, or other port whence the American steerage vessel sails. In New York they are met by other confederates whom they identify by their countersign, and again they are safely transferred and shipped to their destination. Here they are met by their enterprising countryman, lodged and fed, and within a day or two handed over to the foreman in a great steel plant or to the boss of a construction gang on a railway, or to a contractor on a large public improvement. After they have earned and saved a little money they send for their friends to whom the boss has promised jobs. Again their lodging house countryman sells them the steamship ticket and arranges for the safe delivery of those for whom they have sent. In this way immigration is stimulated and new races are induced to begin their American colonization. Eventually the pioneers send for their families, and it is estimated that nearly two thirds of the immigrants in recent years have come on prepaid tickets or on money sent to them from America.

The significance of this new and highly perfected form of inducement will appear when we look back for a moment upon the legislation governing immigration.

At the close of the civil war, with a vast territory newly opened to the west by the railroads, congress enacted a law throwing wide open our doors to the immigrants of all lands. It gave new guaranties for the protection of naturalized citizens in renouncing allegiance to their native country, declaring that expatriation is a natural and inherent right of all people, indispensable to the enjoyment of the rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

In the same year, 1869, the famous Burlingame treaty was negotiated with China, by which Americans in China and Chinese in America should enjoy all the privileges, immunities, and exemptions enjoyed by citizens of the most favored nation. These steps favorable to immigration were in line with the long continued policy of the country from the earliest colonial times.

But a new force had come into American politics—the wage earner. From this time forth the old policies were violently challenged. High wages were to be pitted against high profits. The cheap labor which was eagerly sought by the corporations and large property owners was just as eagerly fought by the unpropertied wage earners. Of course, neither party conceded that it was selfishly seeking its own interest. Those who expected profits contended that cheap foreign labor was necessary for the development of the country; that American natural resources were unbounded, but American workmen could not be found for the rough work needed to turn these resources into wealth; that America should be in the future, as it had been in the past, a haven for the oppressed of all lands; and that in no better way could the principles of American democracy be spread to all peoples of the earth than by welcoming them and teaching them in our midst.

The wage earners have not been so fortunate in their protestations of disinterestedness. They were compelled to admit that though they themselves had been immigrants or the children of immigrants, they were now denying to others what had been a blessing to them. Yet they were able to set forward one supreme argument which our race problems are every day more and more showing to be sound. The future of American democracy is the future of the American wage earner. To have an enlightened and patriotic citizenship we must protect the wages and standard of living of those who constitute the bulk of the citizens. This argument had been offered by employers themselves when they were seeking a protective tariff against the importation of pauper made goods. What wonder that the wage earner should use the same argument to keep out the pauper himself, and especially that he should begin by applying the argument to those races which showed themselves unable rapidly to assimilate and thereby make a stand for high wages and high standards of living? Certain it is that had the white wage earners possessed the suffrage and political influence during colonial times the negro would not have been admitted in large numbers and we should have been spared that race problem which of all is the largest and most nearly insoluble.

The first outbreak of the new founded strength of the American wage earner was directed against a race superior even to the negro immigrants in industry, frugality, intelligence, and civilization—the Chinese. And this outbreak was so powerful, that, in spite of all appeals to the traditions and liberties of America, the national government felt driven to repudiate the treaty so recently signed with the highest manifestations of faith, good will, and international comity.

Very early in the settlement of California the Chinaman had encountered hostile legislation. The state election had been carried by the know-nothings as early as 1854. Discriminating taxes, ordinances, and laws were adopted, and even immigration was regulated. But the state and federal courts declared such legislation invalid as violating treaties or interfering with international relations. Then the wage earning element of California joined as one man in demanding action by the federal government, and eventually, by the treaty of 1880 and the law of 1888, Chinese laborers were excluded. Thus did the Caucasian wage earner score his first and signal victory in reversing what his opponents proclaimed were principles coeval with the foundation of our government.

The next step was the alien contract labor law of 1885 and 1888, placed on the statute books through the efforts of the Knights of Labor. As early as 1875 congress had prohibited the immigration of paupers, criminal, and immoral persons, but the law of 1885 went to the other extreme and was designed to exclude industrial classes. The law is directed against prepayment of transportation, assistance, or encouragement of foreigners to immigrate under contract to perform labor in the United States, and provides for the prosecution of the importer and deportation of the contract immigrant. This law has been enforced against skilled labor, which comes mainly from northwestern Europe, but, owing to the new system of padroni and middlemen above described, it cannot be enforced against the unskilled laborers of southern and eastern Europe, since it cannot be shown that they have come under contract to perform labor. By the amendment and revised law adopted in 1903, after considerable discussion and an effort on the part of the labor unions to strengthen the law,

it was extended so as to exclude not only those coming under contract but also those coming under offers and promises of employment.

From what precedes we see that there are two exactly opposite points of view from which the subject of immigration is approached. One is the production of wealth; the other is the distribution of wealth. He who takes the standpoint of production sees the enormous undeveloped resources of this country—the mines to be exploited, railroads and highways to be built and rebuilt, farms to be opened up or to be more intensively cultivated, manufactures to be multiplied and the markets of the world to be conquered by our exports, while there are not enough workmen, or not enough willing to do the hard and disagreeable work at the bottom.

He who takes the standpoint of distribution sees the huge fortunes, the low wages, the small share of the product going to labor, the sweatshop, the slums, all on account of the excessive competition of wage earner against wage earner.

Consider, first, the bearing of immigration on the production of wealth.

Over four fifths of the immigrants are in the prime of life—the ages between fourteen and forty five. In the year 1902 only 12 out of every 100 were under fifteen years of age, and only 6 out of every 100 over forty five years of age. The census of 1900 offers some interesting comparisons between the native born and the foreign born in this matter of age distribution. It shows quite plainly that a large proportion of the native born population is below the age of industrial production, fully 39 per cent, or two fifths, being under fifteen years of age, while only 5 per cent of the foreign born are of corresponding ages. On the other hand, the ages fifteen to forty four include 46 per cent of the native and 58 per cent of the foreign born. Thus, immigration brings to us a population of working ages unhampered by unproductive mouths to be fed, and, if we consider alone that which produces the wealth of this country and not that which consumes it, then the immigrants add more to the country than does the same number of natives of equal ability. Their home countries have borne the expense of rearing them up to the industrial period of their

lives and then America, without that heavy expense, reaps the profits on the investment.

In another respect does immigration add to our industrial population more than would be done by an equal increase in native population, namely, by the large excess of men over women. In 1902, nearly three fourths (72 per cent) of the immigrants were males and slightly more than one fourth (28 per cent) were females. And the census shows that men predominate over women in the proportion of fifty four to forty six, although among the native born population the sexes are about equal, being in the proportion of 507 males to 493 females.

This small proportion of women and children shows, of course, that it is the workers, not the families, who seek America. Yet the proportions widely vary for different nationalities. Among the Jews 43 per cent are females and 27 per cent children. This persecuted race moves in a body, expecting to make America its home. At the other extreme, the Greeks send only 4 per cent females and 8 per cent children, the Croatians 11 per cent females and 3 per cent children, the south Italians 19 per cent females and 11 per cent children. These are races whose immigration has only recently begun, and, naturally enough, the women and children, except in the case of the Jews, do not accompany the workmen. A race of longer migration, like the Germans, has 37 per cent females and 19 per cent children. The Irish have a peculiar position. Alone of all the races do the women exceed the men, but only 4 per cent are children. Irish girls seeking domestic service explain this preponderance of women.

Such being the proportions of industrial energy furnished by immigration, what is the quality? Much the larger proportion of immigrants are classed as unskilled, including laborers and servants. Omitting those who have no occupation, including mainly women and children, who are 23 per cent of the total, only 17 per cent of the remainder who are working immigrants are skilled, and 83 per cent are unskilled. The proportions vary greatly among the different races. The largest element of skilled labor is among the Jews, a city people, more than half of whom are skilled workmen.

The proportion of skilled labor is probably larger than the foregoing figures would indicate, for it must be noted that they refer only to steerage passengers and that the reports of the commissioner of immigration do not classify cabin passengers as immigrants. Hence in 1902 there were 80,000 immigrants, visitors, and travelers of the more prosperous condition, of whom we have no record respecting their social and industrial qualities. These must have included many skilled workmen, and also many of the professional classes, of whom only 3,000 came by steerage.

The skilled labor which comes to America, especially from northern and western Europe, occupies a peculiar position in our industries. In the first place, the most capable workmen have permanent places at home and it is in general only those who cannot command situations who seek their fortunes abroad. The exceptions to this rule are in the beginnings of an industry like that of tin plate, when almost the entire industry moved bodily to America, and the highly skilled tin workers of Wales brought a kind of industrial ability that had not hitherto existed in this country. As for the bulk of skilled immigrants, they do not represent the highest skill of the countries whence they come.

On the other hand, the European skilled workman is usually better trained than the American, and in many branches of industry, especially machinery and shipbuilding, the English and Scotch immigrants command those superior positions where an all around training is required.

This peculiar situation is caused by the highly specialized character of American industry. In no country has division of labor and machinery been carried as far as here. By division of labor the skilled trades have been split up into simple operations, each of which in itself requires little or no skill, and the boy who starts in as a beginner is kept at one operation, so that he does not learn a trade. The old time journeyman tailor was a skilled mechanic who measured his customer, cut the cloth and trimmings, basted, sewed, and pressed the suit. Now we have factories which make only coats, others which make only vests, others trousers, and there are children's knee pants factories and even ladies' tailor establish-

ments where the former skilled seamstress sees her precious skill dissipated among a score of unskilled workers. Thus the journeyman tailor is displaced by the factory where the coat passes through the hands of thirty to fifty different men and women, each of whom can learn his peculiar operation in a month or two. The same is true in greater or less degree in all industries. Even in the building trades in the larger cities there are as many kinds of bricklayers as there are kinds of walls to be built, and as many kinds of carpenters as there are varieties of woodwork.

So it is with machinery. The American employer does not advertise for a machinist—he wants a lathe hand or a drill press hand, and the majority of his hands are perhaps only automatic machine tenders. The employer cannot afford to transfer these hands from one job to another to enable them to learn the trade. He must keep them at one operation, for it is not so much skill that he wants as it is cheap labor and speed. Consequently, American industry is not producing all around mechanics, and the employers look to Europe for their skilled artisans. In England the trade unions have made it their special business to see that every apprentice learns every part of his trade, and they have prevented employers from splitting up the trades and specializing machinery and thereby transforming the mechanic into the hand. Were it not for immigration, American industries would ere now have been compelled to give more attention to apprenticeship and the training of competent mechanics. The need of apprenticeship and trade schools is being more seriously felt every year, for, notwithstanding the progress of division of labor and machinery, the all around mechanic continues to play an important part in the shop and factory. American trade unions are gaining strength and one of their most insistent demands is the protection of apprenticeship. The bricklayers' union of Chicago even secures from its employers instruction for apprentices in a trade school. Not much headway in this line, however, has yet been made, and American industry has become abnormal, we might almost say suicidal, or at any rate, non self supporting. By extreme division of labor and marvelous application of machinery it

makes possible the wholesale employment in factories of the farm laborers of Europe and then depends on Europe for the better trained types of the skilled mechanic, who, on account of the farm laborer have not been able to learn their trade in America.

Not only does immigration bring to America the strongest, healthiest, and most energetic and adventurous of the work people of Europe and Asia, but those who come work much harder than they did at home. Migration tears a man away from the traditions, the routine, the social props, on which he has learned to rely, and throws him among strangers upon his own resources. He must swim or drown. At the same time he earns higher wages and eats more nourishing food than he had ever thought within reach of one in his station. His ambition is fired, he is stirred by the new tonic of feeling himself actually rising in the world. He pictures to himself a home of his own, he economizes and saves money to send to his friends and family or to return to his beloved land a person of importance. Watch a gang of Italians shoveling dirt under an Irish boss, or a sweatshop of Jewish tailors under a small contractor, and you shall see such feverish production of wealth as an American born citizen would scarcely endure. Partly fear, partly hope, make the fresh immigrant the hardest, if not the most intelligent, worker in our industries.

But, however hard one may work, he can only exercise the gifts with which nature has endowed him. Whether these gifts are contributed by race or by civilization, we shall inquire when we come to the problems of amalgamation and assimilation. At present we are concerned with the varying industrial gifts and capacities of the various races as they actually exist at the time when immigration, annexation, or conquest may take place.

The mental and moral qualities suited to make productive workers depend upon the character of the industry. It is not conceivable that the immigrants of the present day from southern Europe and from Asia could have succeeded as frontiersmen and pioneers in the settlement of the country. In all Europe, Asia, and Africa there was but one race in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that had the prelimi-

nary training necessary to plunge into the wilderness, and, in the face of the Indian, to establish homes and agriculture. This was the English and the Scotch-Irish. The Spaniards and the French were pioneers and adventurers, but they established only trading stations. Accustomed to a paternal government they had not, as a people, the self reliance and capacity for sustained exertion required to push forward as individuals, and cut themselves off from the support of a government across the ocean. They shrank from the herculean task of clearing the forests, planting crops among the stumps, and living miles away from their neighbors. True, the pioneers had among their number several of German, French, and Dutch descent, but these belonged to the second and third generations descended from the immigrants and thrown from the time of childhood among their English-Scotch neighbors. The English race established itself in America not because it was first to come, not because of its armies and navies, but because of its agriculture. Every farm newly carved out of the wilderness became a permanent foothold and soon again sent out a continuous colony of sons and daughters to occupy the fertile land. Based on this self reliant, democratic, industrial conquest of the new world the military conquest naturally, inevitably followed.

But at the present day the character of industry has entirely changed. The last quarter of the nineteenth century saw the vacant lands finally occupied and the tribe of frontiersmen coming to an end. Population now began to recoil upon the east and the cities. This afforded to manufactures and to the mining industries the surplus labor market so necessary for the continuance of large establishments which to-day need thousands of workmen and to-morrow hundreds. Moreover, among the American born workmen, as well as the English and Scotch, is not found that docility, obedience to orders and patient toil which employers desire where hundreds and thousands are brought, like an army, under the direction of foremen, superintendents, and managers. Employers now turn for their labor supply to those eastern and southern sections of Europe which have not hitherto contributed to immigration. The first to draw upon these sources in

large numbers were the anthracite coal operators of Pennsylvania. In these fields the English, Scotch, Welsh, and Irish miners, during and following the period of the civil war, had effected an organization for the control of wages, and the outrages of a secret society known as the Molly Maguires gave occasion for the importation of new races unaccustomed to unison and incapable, on account of language, of co-operation with English speaking miners. Once introduced in the mining industry these races rapidly found their way into the unskilled parts of manufactures, into the service of railroads and large contractors. On the construction of the Erie canal in 1898, of 16,000 workmen, 15,000 were unnaturalized Italians.

On the Pacific slope the Chinese and Japanese immigrants have filled the place occupied by the southeast European in the east and the negro in the south. They are the workmen who built the Pacific railroads and without them it is said that these railroads could not have been constructed until several years after their actual completion.

The immigration of the Chinese reached its highest figures prior to the exclusion laws of 1882, and since that time has been but an insignificant contribution. In their place have come the Japanese, a race whose native land, in proportion to its cultivable area, is more densely populated than any other country in the world. The Chinese and Japanese are perhaps the most industrious of all races, while the Chinese are the most docile. The Japanese excel in imitateness, but are not as reliable as the Chinese. Neither race possesses the originality and ingenuity which characterize the competent American and British mechanic. In the Hawaiian Islands, where they have enjoyed greater opportunities than elsewhere, they are found to be capable workmen in the skilled trades provided they are under the direction of white mechanics. But their largest field of work in Hawaii is in the unskilled cultivation of the great sugar plantations. Here they have been likened to a sort of agricultural automaton, and it becomes possible to place them in large numbers under skilled direction and thus to secure the best results from their docility and industry.