COMMENT ON AMERICAN LIFE

AS FOUND IN RECENT

AUTOBIOGRAPHERS OF IMMIGRANTS

By

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(A.B. Ottawa University, 1924)

Submitted to the Department of English and the Faculty of the Graduate School of the University of Kansas in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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May 1925
TO

A, B, C.

In grateful appreciation of the help that has been no less valuable in the writing of this study because it came indirectly

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It was in the writer's junior year in Ottawa University (Ottawa Kansas), in the winter of 1923, that he first became interested in the type of autobiographical writings used in the present study. A course in contemporary literature had suggested the field of immigrant autobiography, and a careful study, at that time, of Edward Bok's fascinating life story, "The Americanization of Edward Bok", brought a desire for further acquaintance with these stories of strangers who have traversed the long road from "alienship to citizenship" in America.

This desire, however, did not lead to any immediate results. It was not until the winter of 1924-25, when the writer was engaged in graduate study in this University, that it began to take form. Then, at the suggestion of Professor S. L. Whitcomb, the present subject was chosen for research work; and the desire -- kindled by that first reading of Bok's account -- to collect and interpret the comment on American life found in the autobiographies of these immigrants, has found fruition in the present study.

This paper is not presented as a complete survey of the field, nor as a correct transcript of the experiences, opinions and conclusions of all immigrants. Such a result could not be possible, from the nature of the limitations imposed by the material chosen. However, the comment furnished by the authors studied is not devoid of interest
and significance to all Americans who wish to view their country through the eyes of newcomers from distant lands, as well as through their own.

So far as is known, this is one of the first attempts to gather the evidence from the type of American literature represented by the autobiography of the immigrant. Since the publication, in 1904, of Riis's "The Making of an American", many books of its character have been written. The majority of those used in the preparation of this study have appeared since 1912; and the last three years have witnessed the publication of a constantly increasing number of these autobiographies. Even as the final touches are being given to this study, announcement is being made in the press of a new work, similar in type to those here treated, the "Autobiography of Samuel Gompers", the record of a man who came to America after a boyhood in England, here to become a naturalized American citizen. It is obvious, therefore, that this investigation is not a completed one, since new material is so constantly appearing. The aim, herein, is not scientific treatment, but an exposition, in essay form, of the prevailing criticisms that have been made of American life, together with an interpretation of these criticisms.

The fact that at least two of the autobiographies here treated -- "The Americanization of Edward Bok" and "From Immigrant to Inventor", by the Serbian, Michael Pupin -- have enjoyed a long-continued run as "best-sellers" in this country, is evidence that the American people are deeply interested in the problems of the immigrant, and in his reaction toward America and her people. It is the hope of the writer that this paper may contribute something toward a clearer
understanding of the immigrant's perplexities and difficulties; and that it may also suggest to the native American some failings as well as some merits of his own country that he may heretofore have overlooked.

The writer is greatly indebted to the Lawrence Public Library, the University of Chicago Library, and the library of the University of Kansas, for suggestions and material. Above all, he wishes to thank Professor S. L. Whitcomb, under whose direction this thesis has been prepared, for his kindly and constant personal help throughout the entire period of investigation and writing.

Theodore Chauncey Owen.

Lawrence, Kansas

May, 1925.
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It is probable that no country possesses a body of literature corresponding exactly, either in authorship or in content, to the American literary product that forms the basis of this investigation. America is the land to which immigrants have come in numbers far surpassing the inflow to any other country in the world. Thousands and hundreds of thousands of these strangers are received into our land; they gradually become accustomed and adjusted to their new surroundings, and in time they become, many of them, American citizens of the most desirable type.

When this type of American citizen, in his later years, looks back into the early experiences of his American sojourn, and recounts the story of his adventures along the path to citizenship and Americanization, his record is fraught with a two-fold value. Not only is his story a noteworthy one for the light that it throws upon the trials, the triumphs, and the gradual adaptation of the foreigner who makes his home in America; it also abounds in material for the satisfaction of the native American who would know what strangers, who come into our midst, think of America -- of her people, her customs and her traditions. To the foreigner who comes to America there is possible a freshness of vision, a keenness of observation, and a disinterestedness of judgment that make his conclusions and impressions of deep significance. The American-born citizen takes much for granted that is new and strange to the immigrant; he fails to
see, because of his familiarity through daily contact, many phases of his life which are clearly revealed to the impressionable newcomer. It is such comment as this, gleaned from the life stories of immigrants, that forms the substance of this paper. And since some ten or twelve of these writers have been studied intensively in the preparation of this work, it seems advisable, in this introduction, to give a short account of these men and women, in order that their background may be better understood, their attitude toward life clearly seen, and the real meaning of their comment more intelligently grasped and appreciated by the reader of this study.

One of the foremost authorities upon all questions relating to immigration and the problems of the immigrant; and a writer whose autobiography has been extremely valuable in the formulation of this paper, is Dr. Edward Steiner, now a professor in Grinnell College, Grinnell, Iowa. Edward Steiner is a native of what was, at the time of his departure, Austria-Hungary. He is of Jewish parentage; and came to America as a young man of sixteen. Coming through the portals of Castle Garden, as the vast majority of immigrants do, he soon found himself a homeless, friendless wanderer in the streets of New York City. Many of the details of his early struggles to maintain an existence are brought out in various chapters of this study. He worked for a time in New York City; then wandered westward, encountering various experiences in Pittsburg, in Chicago, in the harvest fields of Minnesota, in the coal mines of Ohio. Eventually he was able to enter a theological seminary; and with this training he launched into ministerial work. His own experiences as a penniless immigrant had filled him with a deep interest in and concern for the
needs of our immigrant population, and even during his years in the pulpit, he was actively engaged in social welfare work. So great was his success in this endeavor that he was eventually chosen as head of the department of Applied Christianity in Grinnell College -- a position that he has filled for many years. Most noteworthy of Dr. Steiner's activities is his practice, continued for many years, of travelling to Europe and back in the steerage, disguised as an immigrant. This affords an opportunity for first-hand study of immigration methods and practices that has made him an authority in this field. "On the Trail of the Immigrant" is a study which embodies the results of these experiences as a disguised steerage passenger.

Dr. Steiner's early hardships did not embitter him; he has a profound love for all things American, and his great aim in life is, as he expresses it, "to make the immigrant's arrival in America the fulfillment of his fondest dreams; and to reach the doctrine of fellowship from one end of this great country to the other".

Constantine M. Panunzio is another immigrant who has become a great power for good in the field of immigration. He is a native of South Italy, and came to America at the age of fifteen. His case represents an experience probably more typical of a great majority of immigrants than does that of any other writer in this field. For three years he was cast about from one section of New England to another at the mercy of unscrupulous Americans who were willing and waiting to take advantage of the "greenhorn"; to exploit him to the utmost. But Panunzio also came into contact with the better elements of American society, at last, and when he had attended a small college in Maine -- Maine Wesleyan Seminary -- and graduated therefrom, his
Americanization was complete. He left school determined to do all in his power to mitigate the sufferings of immigrants, and his record has been a notable one. Not only did he contribute much valuable aid to the solving of Boston's "foreign settlement" problems; he also served in the American forces in Italy during the World War, and upon his return to America became a member of the United States Immigration Board, where he has since served constantly. It is of interest to note the latest direction that Mr. Panunzio's activity has taken. The writer has before him a circular describing an "Immigrant Backgrounds Tour" which touches the chief sources of immigration in central and southwestern Europe -- a tour which is under the supervision of New York University, and which will extend from June 17 until August 22 of the present year. The director of this tour is Mr. Panunzio, who is, as the bulletin reads, "an authority upon this subject, as, aside from having travelled widely in Europe, and having come into contact with various immigrant groups in this country, he has given years of intensive study to the field and has lectured widely upon Immigrant Backgrounds, as these backgrounds condition the immigrant's outlook upon life in America".

Mary Antin, like Steiner, is of Jewish extraction, having come to America from Russian Poland. The Antin family lived in and about Boston, chiefly in the tenement districts, but the brilliant and ambitious Mary found opportunity to acquire a college education. Her years of maturity have been spent in active work among the poor classes in the Eastern states, her supervision centering around the Hale House in Boston; and her work has been wonderfully fruitful, in bringing about better living conditions, as well as improved housing
and social conditions among the residents of tenement districts.

Miss Antin's autobiography, "The Promised Land", reflects the deep idealism of her nature, and is an intimate picture of the daily life of the Jewish immigrant. Her observations on life in the slums are particularly illuminating and suggestive to the student of this social problem.

Earliest, in point of arrival in America, is Jacob Riis, who first landed in New York in 1884. Following the period of early struggle, Mr. Riis, who is a native of Denmark, settled down to the business of police reporter in one of the worst slum districts of New York. From that time on he bent every energy to the task of clearing up some of the evils then existing in New York's tenement streets, and so successful was he that numerous authorities gave to him chief credit for eliminating some of the worst and most persistent conditions. Mr. Riis has told his story of this battle to clean up the slums in his book "The Ten Year's War", and a further study of immigrant conditions in the slums is found in the volume "How the Other Half Lives" -- one of the first great contributions to the literature of social welfare work. Mr. Riis's autobiography, "The Making of an American", is crowded with illuminating comment on American life and, although it was written twenty years ago, it is still considered one of the most valuable treatises of its kind. The influence of Mr. Riis for good, in New York City, was so great that no less a person than Theodore Roosevelt paid him a public tribute, calling him one of the great Americans of the generation.

Ludwig Lewisohn is a German Jew who, to a greater degree than all the other writers used in this study, is hostile in his criticism of American life. During the years of his early manhood,
Lewisohn suffered many stings and slights because of his Jewish blood. Whether he actually suffered more unjust treatment than did Steiner or Mary Antin -- themselves Jews -- is perhaps to be questioned; but Lewisohn is of a temperament which feels any discrimination most keenly, and this morbid, melancholy cast of his nature has resulted in a general rebelliousness toward all the conditions which he finds about him in American life. Although many of his criticisms may be said to be exaggerated, his autobiography, "Upstream", is nevertheless a valuable document to all genuine students of American affairs. Mr. Lewisohn is especially severe in commenting upon American educational shortcomings. As a thorough-going idealist, he has no place in his sympathies for the materialistic interests that are so animating a force in American life; and for the characteristic of commercialism he also censures his adopted country with great severity -- a severity that rises, at times, to passionate denunciation.

The career of Edward Bok, who, as editor of the "Ladies Home Journal" was for many years one of the leading influences in American life, is a well known one; and his autobiography, "The Americanization of Edward Bok", has enjoyed great popularity in this country. Bok came to America from the Netherlands, and with characteristic Dutch qualities of thoroughness and exactness, he presents a review of American life, in this autobiography, that is replete with pointed and suggestive comment. His work has been one of the most valuable ones in the preparation of this thesis.

Michael Pupin's "From Immigrant to Inventor" is also a book of wide popular appeal. Pupin is a native of Serbia who came to our
shores at the age of twelve, and has since made a large place for himself in scientific and mechanical circles. His voluminous life story has been particularly valuable in supplying authentic comment on the American educational system, on the progress of science in this country, and on the qualities which make the American people the "leaders of the world in almost every field of human endeavor", as the Serbian immigrant writes. Pupin is especially sympathetic with American ideals and traditions; he finds in them not only an explanation of the glorious past of this country, and a justification of the present, but also a radiant promise for the future.

The other works that have been consulted need but brief mention, as the material they yielded, while not less valuable than that of other books, has, for various reasons, not been so great in quantity. Andrew Carnegie's is an absorbing story of American business life. Mukerji and Rimbany have been found valuable chiefly because they tell the story of the Oriental's reaction to America's ultra-Occidental characteristics. Walter Damrosch's "My Musical Life" has thrown special light upon the aesthetic interests of American life.

Such has been the abundance of the material at hand that the problem, for the present writer, has been not what to include, but rather what to exclude; and it is with great regret that much valuable and detailed evidence has been omitted, because of the demands of space.
CHAPTER ONE

First Days in America
The prevailing sentiment among native-born Americans is perhaps that the immigrant who comes to our shores brings with him little that is of any great value. America has been so long lauded as the land of opportunity for those who have not found all the advantages they desire in other countries, that it is only natural for the resident American to feel that America offers everything to the immigrant and receives nothing in return.

Such is not the feeling, however, that the immigrant has as he comes to his new home. He realizes, it is true, that he is approaching a land of great promise, of boundless opportunity, and of greater wealth and expanse than the country he has left; but he is not usually over-awed by these considerations. The autobiographical writings of these immigrants speak of many losses that the writers feel they have suffered through their coming to America; and it is very evident that every emigrant from a foreign land feels that he is bringing something with him that is worthy of perpetuation, and something which, if properly encouraged and developed, may become a distinct contribution to American life.

One of the qualities which the average immigrant brings with him, and one which he often loses during the first days in the new country, is that of trustful simplicity. The newcomer feels that in
entering the land of wealth, freedom, and opportunity, he will find thoughtful and considerate treatment at the hands of his new countrymen. He wants to look upon the people he meets, as friends. He believes in them, trusts them; and all too often the treatment that he receives changes his attitude of trustfulness to one of suspicion and distrust. This is a feeling which may then lead to an active dislike of American people and American ways, and many an immigrant has suffered so complete a disillusionment that he becomes a bitter and dangerous alien, instead of developing into the honorable citizen that his early attitude promised.

The immigrant brings with him, in the words of Dr. Steiner, a "latent idealism" that is one of his most valuable potentialities. It is this which makes him eager to seize upon the best that America has to offer; to become a "new man"; to provide for his family in a way that will enable his children to stand upon the same level with American children. It is a case of an old-world product joining itself with a comparatively new social order. "Remember", says Mary Antin, "every time you pass the greasy alien on the street, that he was born thousands of years before the oldest native American; and he may have something to communicate to you when you two shall have learned a common language."

Because he has made a change that he intends shall work out for his betterment, the immigrant comes to America with a determination to make the most of every opportunity that is offered, no matter what may be the cost. He is willing to endure all manner of privations that his children may secure an education; he will starve his body, 

1. Antin, p. 182
many times, that he may enrich his mind. That is what America is
for, to the immigrant. The land of opportunity it is, but oppor-
tunities must be used, must be grasped, held, squeezed dry. As he
stands on the deck of the incoming steamer, the immigrant may not be
rich in worldly possessions, but he brings to the new country a con-
tribution in the form of a passionate desire to find his place, to
work, think and live freely, in the new land of freedom, that is
worth much more to America than would be a few more rupees, lire,
francs, florins, or pfennigs in his pocket.

Jacob Riis brought with him from his native Denmark, from its
woods, its fields, and its spotless homes, a love of cleanliness and
beauty that made him the greatest asset the New York slums have ever
had — it was the driving force in his "Ten Year’s War" on the slum
and tenement district that eventually cleaned up some of the city’s
worst areas. Edward Bok, the Dutch boy who emigrated to our shores
forty years ago, brought with him certain qualities of uprightness,
of industry, of thoroughness, and of purposefulness, that made him
one of the outstanding figures in our national life, a powerful force
for good in almost every home in the land. Michael Pupin, the penni-
less Serbian lad, carried to America from his native Serbian province
an idealism born of the traditions and legends he had imbibed during
his early years, that has made him a leading spirit in America’s
scientific circles. Edward Steiner found consolation, during his
sufferings in the steerage when he first came to America, in the
thought that he would later be able to come back over his course and
remedy many of the evils that made the lot of the immigrant a hard
one; and this early resolve has borne fruit a hundred-fold, so that
today the "Trail of the Immigrant" is not the harsh and friendless one that it once was.

The immigrant does not, if we are to believe his own words, and the testimony of his own deeds, come to America empty-handed. The Italian, Constantine Panunzio, has well said, "we would do well to afford to every newcomer an opportunity to develop and to contribute the best which he has brought with him, rather than to destroy it by any means, direct or indirect".  

2. Panunzio, p. 189
The Nature of Reception in America

Viewed from the economic and sociological standpoint, many of the practices of the Immigration Ports seem necessary, and therefore desirable and not to be censured. But from the angle provided by a study of the personal accounts of immigrants, it becomes immediately apparent that there are many features of America's immigration system not particularly helpful nor useful to the future citizens, "knocking at our gates".

The eager expectancy with which the immigrant looks forward to his arrival upon American soil often ends in a sort of disillusionment and an abrupt coming down to harsh reality that makes his welcome seem to him anything but a pleasant one. Most of the incoming steerage passengers are cheered, before the day of disembarkation, by the fact that assistance is promised by the agents of various National Immigrant societies. Always, of course, there are a few fortunate ones who are met at the gateway by relatives who have preceded them over the sea; but the lot of the friendless newcomer is often a discouraging and a painful one.

Once the rigors of the various inspectors and gatemen are passed -- and many are the pitiful stories of those who, for one reason and another, have not been able to pass into the Promised Land -- the immigrant finds himself alone in a strange world, with no friends to help him in his bewilderment. And right at this point the immigrant faces a crucial test. There is a loss of reckoning that follows inevitably upon an uprooting; and with this loss of reckoning is likely to follow
a cutting loose from all sense of responsibility. The old standards are gone, the new standards have not yet fitted themselves into the life of the immigrant; and the failure of America, at this juncture, lies in the fact that she offers no sympathetic and intelligent aid to the newcomer, in the hour of his greatest need. All too often the stranger who did not have waiting friends found no gateway open to him except the saloon, the brothel, the cheap lodging house, and perhaps eventually the "lock-up". Edward Steiner came to America an alert, intelligent youth, burning with a desire to come into contact with the best that his adopted country could offer him; but the experiences of his early days were so dispiriting as to make him feel that, after all, America was not the most remotely like what he had dreamed of its being, and he began to harbor a profound sympathy for those who were at war against a government that seemed at once stupid and venal. Fortunately, Steiner escaped from these first perplexities; but for the student of social problems, the lesson remains. The primary influences at work upon the immigrant result in much misunderstanding and misery, and require subsequent readjustment.

Panunzio has said of his "welcome" to America, "Those first three days in America have left an impression upon my mind which can never be erased, and which gives me a most profound sense of sympathy for immigrants as they arrive". 3

It is an interesting fact that immigrants of certain nationalities tend to drift at once into certain occupations. Abraham Rihbany, a Syrian immigrant, found upon his arrival in New York that, since he could not speak English and had no capital with which to go into

3. Panunzio, p. 74
business, he would be obliged to turn to the occupation that thousands of Syrians were following -- that of peddling jewelry and notions.

When Panunzio, fresh from Italy, began to cast about for a means of livelihood in his new surroundings, he discovered that a welcome awaited the Italian workman in only one occupation, that of working with "peck and shovel". The explanation for this form of specialization lies in the fact that the majority of Italian immigrants were farmers in their native land. But farmers in Italy know nothing of American modern methods; they are accustomed to working chiefly with hand implements. Hence, when they arrive in America they are led to engage in an occupation that best fits their past training; and as it cannot, in this country, be farming, the pick and shovel occupation offers the most familiar means of employment.

As the immigrant steps from the Immigration Halls, upon the threshold of the United States, he is hailed, usually, by a surging mass of malevolent-looking gentry, each anxious to get hold of him and carry him, bodily if need be, to the boarding-house which he represents. This, in the case of the majority of immigrants who have recorded their life stories, constitutes the nearest approach to a welcome into the new home; and all too often the accommodations thus afforded leave everything to be desired.
First impressions, whether they be of new friends, of new scenes, of new experiences, or of a new country, are always strong, vivid, and fresh. And often they have a degree of veracity and of trustworthiness that makes them of more value to the investigator than later and more studied observations.

For this reason the comments to be found in autobiographies of immigrants relating to their first impressions of America are peculiarly interesting. The whole value of foreign comment upon American life, customs and institutions -- and therefore the whole value of the present work -- lies in the fact that the stranger who comes to our gates is able to see conditions, customs, and facts with a freshness and a clearness that cannot be attained by the native-born American. We who have grown up from earliest childhood in our present surroundings accept many things as a matter of course that arouse the keenest interest in the mind of the individual who is viewing them for the first time. He it is who is able to get a truer perspective; who can see many of the realities that are obscured to the sight of the native American by the complexity of minor interests and activities that engross his attention.

Edward Bok comments pointedly upon the question of the place of the foreign-born American in our national life. "When I look around at the American-born I have come to know as my close friends", he writes, "I wonder whether, after all, the foreign-born does not make in some sense a better American -- whether he is not less content to
let its faulty institutions be what they are when he sees America's shortcomings; whether his is not the deeper desire to see America greater; whether in seeing faults more clearly he does not make a more decided effort to have America reach those ideals or those fundamentals of his own land which he feels are in his nature, and the best of which he is anxious to graft into the character of his adopted land?" 4 When considerations of this sort are to be reckoned with, it is apparent that opinions of these newcomers to our land, from the very first days, are fraught with notable import for us.

As may be anticipated, many of the early comments turn upon impressions of the tremendous size and complexity of American city life. By far the larger percentage of immigrants find their way first into New York City, and the amazing wealth, activity and gorgeousness presented by this first spectacle are sure to call forth expressions of awe and wonder from the incoming foreigner. As young Rihbany walked out upon the New York sidewalks, he was almost overcome by the impression which the great thoroughfare, Broadway, made upon his mind. "The amazingly wide sidewalks", he records, "were solid streams of humanity. Compared with the leisurely gait of Orientals, every one in that vast multitude seemed to be running." 5 Nor was Rihbany by any means alone in this sense of the turbulent splendor of American city life. When Ludwig Lewisohn, as a youthful German-Jew, first found himself on the streets of New York, at the age of thirteen, he was so appalled at the feverish activity flowing all about him that he felt a "curious timidity" creep over him -- a timidity which kept him from entering into the current, lest he be overwhelmed by its

4. Bok, p. 451
5. Rihbany, p. 199
force. Yet this very overflow of energy, so apparent to the newcomer, was to him a source of encouragement. As Michael Pupin stood on the deck of the ship that had brought him to the new world, and saw the shores of New York harbor throbbing with activity, he reflected that "in these seething pots of human action there must be some one activity which needed him". And the thought gave him courage to go out and seek this niche that he felt so certain was awaiting him.

Not so fortunate, perhaps, as was Pupin are many of the immigrants who view the approaching shore-line of the New World with the same kindling emotions. But the fact that the inspiration is always present is one of the great signs of hope to those who feel that importation of the right sort of immigrant is a vital factor in the preservation of the youth and vigor of America.

Toward even the despised slum districts -- those quarters where poor immigrants foregather to live, for the most part, as unkempt, half-washed, toiling, "foreigners", pitiful to the eyes of social missionaries and the despair of boards of health -- the hopeful and idealistic immigrant has an attitude of cheerfulness. He realizes that this is not all that he wished to find in the land of freedom and opportunity, but the immediate disappointment is smoothed over with the feeling that the slums are only a sort of house of detention for poor aliens, where they live on probation until they can show certificates of good citizenship. Such is the aura of glamor with which everything "American" is surrounded, to the eyes of the immigrant, that he finds cause for rejoicing even in an environment that may have little of beauty to the native-born resident. When Mary

6. Pupin, p. 38
Antin received her first introduction to a short box alley, with its two rows of three-story tenements as the sides, a stringy strip of sky as its lid, a littered pavement as its floor and a narrow mouth as its exit, that was to be her home, she saw none of these unattractive qualities. "I saw two imposing rows of brick buildings, loftier than any dwelling I had ever lived in. Brick was even on the ground for me to tread on, instead of common earth or boards. I looked to the topmost row of windows, and my eyes were filled with the May blue of an American sky!"  

It must not be understood, however, that all first impressions of America are favorable ones. In the case of many incoming foreigners, the difficulties and trials that beset them are so great that even the innate optimism and determination to make the best of things, that the immigrant brings with him, are scarcely sufficient to keep him from despairing of ever finding the America of his dreams. The trying period that Panunzio describes as coming during the first years of his American residence is all too characteristic of the experience of many. Panunzio fell in with unscrupulous Americans, who robbed him, cheated him, and introduced him to the lowest levels of life. In the village where he obtained his first glimpse of what he thought was a representative American community, he heard the vilest profanity, he heard words of the most wholesome connotations given the filthiest meanings, so that a part of the English language was forever soiled for him; he saw illicit liquor traffic going on in open defiance of the law; even murder and robbery were not uncommon. Had he gone back to Italy at this stage, as he more than once tried to do, the picture of American life he would have carried with him would have been a

7. Antin, p. 184
sordid one indeed. For him there came a change, and he was able to correct his first unfortunate impressions; but as he avers in his autobiography, "I do not hesitate to assert that thousands upon thousands of foreigners have only that kind of a picture of America to look upon throughout their lives." 8

Minor adaptations, such as learning that bananas are to be peeled before being eaten; discovering that the mysterious American institution, the "Sandwich", is only a piece of cheese between two pieces of bread; acquiring skill in the use of the rocking chair which, surprising though it may seem to the native American, is something of a rarity in the Old World; and learning that Indians are no longer a menace to the life of the white man, are but amusing episodes in the early experiences of the newcomer. But a sobering sense of America's responsibility to the immigrant comes with a reading of such a passage as this one, taken from Rihbany's account of his first days in the United States: "I felt a need of new faculties to fit my environment. What was awaiting me in America, whose life, as I had been told, was so vast, so complex, and so enlightened? Whatever the future had 'of wonder or surprise', it seemed that merely being in the United States was enough of a blessing to call forth my profoundest gratitude." 9

Steiner felt these same raptures. "America! we were in the magic, the holy land! I have seen this rapture and felt it; I have rejoiced in it when others felt it, and I want all those to taste it who come and come again." 10 And Jacob Riis felt the necessity of preserving, from the very start, the idealistic attitude in which the immigrant approaches America, when he wrote, "I should like the entrance into the United States to be a poem to all who come, and not

8. Panunzio, p. 136
9. Rihbany, p. 183
10. Riis, p. 172
the horrible tragedy into which it often resolves itself when the first ecstasy is over. All the way across the sea I would make of every ship a school". 11

Before the first impressions of the immigrant can be happy and enduringly happy once, the writers who have been through the experience of coming into a new country feel that many changes must take place. The newcomers must be told that in America there is an honest reward for an honest day's work; that the Goddess of Liberty welcomes all who come in her name; that she guarantees freedom to all who obey the law; that the law is reasonable, and that it falls alike upon rich and poor; that there are no barriers except those which the immigrant himself must break down in himself. And all of this means a higher idealistic development in our national life than now exists.

11. Riis, p. 114
- Difficulties of Finding Work -

Jacob Riis landed in New York with barely enough money to buy his first meal; Ribbany left Castle Garden with nine cents in his pocket; Michael Pupin spent the only five cent piece that he had in his possession to buy a piece of prune pie as he went out from the gate of Castle Garden; Edward Steiner started his life in the New World on a borrowed capital of twenty-five cents; Panunzio brought to the mainland, when he landed surreptitiously from the ship which he had determined to desert, only a bag containing a few clothes and provisions -- and so the instances might be multiplied. All of which goes to show that one of the most imperative problems faced by the newly-arrived immigrant is that of finding work at once. It is a case of work or starve. Young Steiner found that, although he had arrived in a "free" country, the only free commodity seemed to be ice water. He drank great quantities of this, in an effort to disarrange his digestive apparatus, so as to stop the gnawing pangs of hunger; but the more water he drank the hungrier he grew.

One of the particular difficulties facing the young immigrant as he sets about obtaining work, is that he can find nothing to do that is at all similar to the occupation he pursued in his native country. Even the poorest immigrant is usually accustomed to better paid and less menial occupations than he is forced to descend to in the new surroundings, and it is only natural that the way seems hard to him as he casts about for a means of livelihood. It is noteworthy, however, that there is very little complaint to be found in the writings of
these men who have gone through the most trying early experiences. The immigrant is entirely willing to start over anew, from the very beginning, if necessary; but he does ask that he be given a fair chance to work up to something better. When Mukerji, the young Hindu of high caste, found himself in New York without any financial backing, he deigned to seek a type of work to which he would never have stooped in his native land. But he was in a land of opportunity and of democracy, where any form of honest toil was honorable, and he saw nothing amiss in washing dishes for his meals and lodging.

One exception, however, to this general rule, appears in the case of Pupin. When offered employment, at the Castle Garden bureau, that involved the milking of a cow, the young immigrant rejected the proposal flatly. According to Serbian traditions, milking a cow is a decidedly feminine job. Within a few days, nevertheless, he had sufficiently adapted himself to this new standard so that he was glad to go to work as chore boy for a New Jersey farmer.

The difficulty of adapting himself to whatever kind of work he is able to get, is the immigrant's chief concern during the early days. The history of Mary Antin's father who, although he had been a well educated and scholarly man in his native Polotsk, was forced to enter the lowest ranks when he migrated to America, is the history of thousands who come to America, like him, with pockets empty, hands untrained to the use of tools, and minds cramped by centuries of repression in the conservative, backward-looking Old World. Edward Steiner, with his university training in philology, found that America seemed to have little need for his services. His humorous comment upon his situation is representative of the experiences of thousands
of intelligent immigrants: "The only personal asset I had was linguistic ability, with special emphasis on philology in the field of the Slavic language group. Unfortunately, on my way up as far as City Hall Park I met no one who was looking for a man with such academic values". 12

When Pupin, after several weeks of wandering from job to job, finally obtained work in a cracker factory, where his duties were not arduous physically, but required a certain degree of mechanical dexterity, he made a discovery which he, as well as several other recorders have emphasized. "I soon discovered", writes Pupin, "that in manual dexterity the American boys and girls stand very much higher than does the foreign-born youth. In spite of my ambition and hard work, my hands would never do more than move fairly rapidly -- theirs simply vibrated". 13 Here, then, is another disadvantage that the immigrant searching for work must overcome. Pupin adds the interesting observation that he attributes much of the wonder of American adaptability and versatility to the attention that is given to manual training, the lack of which in his own life, was a handicap that he felt during every step of his early progress in America. He later made the discovery that three of the greatest characters in American history, Franklin, Jefferson, and Lincoln, excelled in practical arts requiring dexterity. "That the constructive genius of the American nation can, in part, be traced to the discipline which one gets from early manual training here, I do not doubt", he affirms. 14

Often the immigrant is called upon to endure the most exhausting and trying occupations. Riis, for a few weeks, was forced to make his living by working in a mine where he and his partner were paid by

12. Steiner, p. 50
13. Pupin, p. 73
14. Ibid. p. 74
the ton for coal that they dug out from a tunnel so narrow that
they had to work on their knees the entire day. Panunzio fared not
much better when he worked with his pick and shovel for ten hours a
day in the heat of midsummer, and received in return only a pittance.
Steiner, who fell into the "Sweat-Shop" system, slaved over a heavy
iron the more lifting of which took nearly all of his boyish strength,
and at the end of the week had only two dollars and fifty cents to
repay him for his calloused hands and benumbed spirits.

Not the least of the early hardships encountered by the immig-
 rant are those of poor lodging. When no more than five or ten cents
can be spared for a night's lodging, it is easily apparent that the
accommodations will not be spacious or comfortable. Such was the
feeling of repugnance that the Police Station lodging houses stirred
in the hearts of their occupants, that two of the immigrants who were
once forced to sleep therein, Riis and Panunzio, later bent every
effort to bring about the abolition of the unsanitary, beastly dens
that were rented to unfortunate wanderers. Thanks to their efforts,
this type of lodging-house is now a thing of the past in New York.

All too often the immigrant in search of work is exploited by
unscrupulous employment agencies. The practice of sending out "gangs"
into literal slavery, in the lumber trade, was one which enmeshed
Panunzio during his first week in America, and he found it well-nigh
impossible to escape from the bondage in which he was held. The
worker's wages were slight enough, to begin with, and by a clever
method of requiring that all food and clothing be bought at "company
stores", the money was all returned to the pockets of the exploiters.

In view of the difficulties faced on every hand, it is surprising
that more immigrants do not lose heart completely. Certainly, the first experiences in job-hunting are likely to be so disspiriting that the newcomer has difficulty in carrying on his fight for a living. When there comes the knowledge that "greenhorns" are not wanted by any of the advertisers for help, and the night comes upon a penniless and homeless stranger, the strain is almost beyond human endurance. Steiner, for all the happiness of his later years, comments thus upon Broadway: "I have seen it in varied moods and have felt its thrill, its materialistic glory, but I can remember it best as a long, cruel, "lane that has no turning". And especially is the morale of the immigrant lowered when, in spite of his willingness and ability to work, a "slack time" closes down the openings he is so eager to fill. Then it is difficult to earn even enough money to keep body and soul together; the resistance is lowered; the spirit is weakened. It is at this point that the heretofore law-abiding and honest immigrant is likely to turn criminal, in a last blind protest against the social system that will not give him a fighting chance. Even the mature and disciplined Lewisohn came near to the breaking point after his first week in New York. "I heard the far away roar of New York, like the roar of a sinister and soulless machine that drags men in and crushes them between its implacable wheels. It seemed to me that I would never be able to face it again".

15. Steiner, p. 76
16. Lewisohn, p. 105
- Learning the New Language -

The difficulties, to the foreigner, of learning the English language are proverbial; they are also very real, if we are to credit the accounts of those who have been through the ordeal. It is the experience of a large majority of the poorer immigrants, to come to America with practically no knowledge of English; or, at best, the merest smattering of the new tongue. Under such conditions it is natural that the immigrant should at once seek out members of his own race already residing in America; for with them only can he make himself understood during the first few weeks or months. This desire on the part of the newcomer to join with his own countrymen, while it is a seemingly necessary step in his progress, it yet a dangerous one for the best welfare of the immigrant. It is owing to this tendency that racial segregation takes place, that the so-called "colonies" grow up in our cities and rural districts; and it is the testimony of all writers upon the subject that the only way for the alien to get well started upon his way toward American citizenship, is to forego the native language entirely, and plunge into an environment where English alone is spoken. Only in this way will any rapid progress in learning the new language be made. Within two months after his arrival in America, the Italian, Panunzio, who had absolutely no previous knowledge of English, was able to make himself clearly understood to his American employers and associates. But the factor which made this possible, was the fact that there was not a single Italian-speaking resident in Stacyville, so he was forced to use English at all times.
Commenting upon this advantage, Mr. Panunzio writes: "It has been my observation that if young immigrants in the early stages of their life in this country have the opportunity to be separated from those who speak the native tongue, in a comparatively brief period they get a grasp of the English language. And what is more, in the words of another student of the immigration problem, "they come to understand the advantages of mingling with American people and to develop a wholesome attitude toward America and all things American".

Mr. Rihbany, the Syrian immigrant, felt that his rapid mastery of the new tongue was due to his complete separation from all people of his own race. When asked, at one time, by Edward Everett Hale, how in the world he had managed to learn English so well, Mr. Rihbany's reply was, "I really don't know. It is wonderful what even a few months can do to equip with linguistic facilities a person who listens with his ears and his understanding alike. My being entirely cut off from using the Arabic language was my greatest aid in acquiring English. I listened with eager sympathy to the words of preachers, merchants, artisans, farmers, hack-drivers, housewives, and others who spoke as they felt in dealing with the various issues of life."

Edward Bok suffered a great deal of mental anguish when, without any knowledge of English, he was put into the Brooklyn public schools, along with the native-born children. But in later years he came to realize that his father's argument in reaching this seemingly cruel decision was a sound one: if the boy was to become an American, the sooner he became a part of the life of the country and learned its language for himself, the better.

17. Panunzio, p. 108
18. Riis, p. 76
19. Rihbany, p. 280
The power of the United States to assimilate the people of every nation and tongue is a constant marvel to Europe. Dr. Steiner points out that the forces which bring about the miracle work, for the most part, automatically. And the one force most vital to the process of assimilation is the English language, which is not foisted upon the stranger by any official decree, but which has back of it a still greater compulsion. Probably if there were a law compelling all immigrants to learn the English language, the country would be a linguistic battlefield in which every tongue, from Sanskrit to Esperanto, would struggle for supremacy, and thus would be destroyed any hope of ever assimilating the "stranger within the gates". But the subtle force of language creeps in everywhere, just because it is not driven. As Dr. Steiner very picturesquely puts it, "It comes in by single words like 'yes' and 'no', and modified others like 'gemovt' and 'ge-jumpt'. Then it comes by leaps and bounds until only a vestige of the mother tongue remains." 20

The method of teaching which is most effective for the needs of the immigrant, has already been suggested. It is to supply the pupil with the words that he needs in his everyday life; to have him listen, as did Ribbeny, to the daily talk of his associates; to throw him at once into full fellowship with those who already speak English. And right here is a failing in the public school system that has often been observed by critics. If there is any one thing that the foreign-born child should be most carefully taught, surely that one thing is the English language; yet the experience of the child is often that of Edward Bok, who says, of his early school days, "There was absolutely

20. Steiner, p. 73
no indication on the part of the teacher or principal, of responsibility for seeing that a foreign-born boy should acquire the English language correctly. I was taught as if I knew the language perfectly and, of course, I was left dangling in the air, with no conception of what I was trying to do."

Many and laughable are the various experiences that befell the writers of these autobiographies, as they struggled to master the new tongue. Mary Antin, with her Russian-Jewish background, "stuck fast at the definite article" and it was many months before she was able to pronounce the dreadful English "th" sound without a buzzing effect. Edward Steiner quickly acquired a vocabulary from some of his early associates that was more lurid than he realized. When he used some of his newly-acquired language to his Irish forelady, he was amazed to see her fly into a rage, and still more amazed and puzzled when, a few hours later, he was dismissed with the words, "You are too insolent". When Panunzio was told by his employer that some of the potatoes were "good", pointing to the large ones, and some were "rotten", indicating a pile of small and decayed potatoes; the young immigrant decided that "good" must mean large, and "rotten" small. But when a few days later he saw a little colt passing by the house, and remarked to his friend, "That is a rotten colt", he was shown the error of his ways.

Once the immigrant has learned to read, he is anxious to devour anything written in the new language that comes within his reach. It was a memorable day for young Steiner when first discovered a set of Shakespeare in the boarding house where he lived, and out of the experience came "a great uplift and a marvellous enrichment of vocabulary". 22 The Bible, and especially the New Testament, because of

22. Steiner, p. 86.
the simplicity and purity of their diction, exercised a powerful influence upon the linguistic development of Riis, Rihbany and Panunzio. Such was the impression made upon the avid mind of Ludwig Lewisohn by the readers, the grammars, and the spelling books that brought him his first contact with English, that he wrote forty years later, "I have not seen those books since, but I can visualize many of their pages to this day." 23

After all, there are some compensations in learning a language in the piecemeal fashion that must be the method of the average immigrant. It means that the vocabulary is going to be fraught with many rich and varied associations. "It is like gathering a bouquet, blossom by blossom", as Mary Antin describes it; and she adds, "Particular words remain associated with important occasions in the learner's mind. I could write a history of my English vocabulary that should be at the same time an account of all my comings and goings, my mistakes and triumphs, during the years of my initiation." 24

Lewisohn rejoices in the linguistic and literary traditions of the English race that he, because he had to assimilate them slowly and laboriously, loves more than he believes the average native-born Anglo-American does. He has a greater appreciation for the beauty of the English language, and a deeper sense of its order and eloquence and majesty because he was not born to them, but had to make them his own through a conscious and ever-interesting struggle.

23. Lewisohn, p. 47
- Beginnings of Adaptation -

Dating from the first day in the new land, there goes on within the immigrant a readjustment, a rearrangement, an adaptation to the new environment that is greater or lesser in degree according to the degree of difference between the customs and traditions of his native country, and those of America. Not all of the immigrants face the same extreme changes that confronted Mukerji, the Hindu, and Rhibany, the Syrian, upon their arrival. In the case of these men -- and in the case, supposedly, of all this class of immigrants -- the change was from the Oriental mode of living to the Occidental. Kipling's line:

"East is East and West is West, and never the twain shall meet" contains a germ of truth that is significant of the difficulties encountered by the Asiatic when he seeks to adapt himself to the demands of life in the New World.

The fundamental difference in the standards of the West and the East, as Mukerji sees it, is in the conception of time held by the two hemispheres. The West believes in the time process, and plans its existence with a view to economizing time, and of using it to the utmost. "But the East", notes Mukerji, "begins by denying the fundamental reality of time, which necessarily changes for us the relative importance of all that results from time. This is the essential difference between the East and the West." 25 For Mukerji, then, the problem of adjusting himself to the conditions of haste, of specialization, of efficiency, and of competition that he found in America

25. Mukerji, p. 156
was a very great one, involving a readjustment of his whole philo-
sophy of life.

Although in the case of the European immigrant the adaptation
is not so difficult, not involving a fundamental change such as the
one just described in the life of the Oriental, there are, nevertheless,
many adjustments that have to be made. One of the early phases of
this desire to become an American as soon as possible is the quite
common practice of changing the name, especially when the name is dis-
tinctly "foreign" sounding. Some immigrants make this change on their
own initiative, for the sake of convenience, or in order to be Amer-
icans at least in name. More often, perhaps, the changes are super-
imposed by employers, who give a simpler and more familiar name to
their alien workmen in order that they may the more easily remember
them. This is what occurred in the case of young Panunzio. His
employer could not pronounce his "Tyetalian" name, so he changed it
to "Frank Nardi". The young immigrant was at first bewildered, and
wondered what his relatives would think. He was ashamed to acknowledge
to his people at home that he had consented to the change in his
name, and for many months he sent them envelopes addressed to "Frank
Nardi", and directed them to insert, in those, sealed letters bearing
his proper name. "Later I learned", writes Panunzio, "that this is
precisely the practice resorted to by many immigrants with change-
name.

The average immigrant desires to become Americanized as rapidly
as possible. Withal, however, there is evinced a desire to cling to
the old that is not easily overcome in a great many cases. When the

26. Panunzio, p. 107
Serbian lad, Michael Pupin, was first asked if he intended to become an American, he replied: "My mother, my native village, my Serbian orthodox faith, my Serbian language and the people who speak it are my 'Serbian notions'" 27 Mary Antin’s mother could not accede to the rather headlong and strenuous methods that the father, who had been longer in America, wished to use to make Americans of his family. The Jewish customs, the Jewish practices and the Jewish traditions were so deeply rooted in her that even in the new land, where there was freedom from every sort of religious compulsion, where she was free to escape from many of the irksome demands of the old Judaism, she could not bring herself to give up some of the old symbols of her faith.

One of the commonest sources of chagrin to the immigrant, is his feeling of social deficiency. In the face of the wealth, the culture, and the elegance of many American families and institutions, the poor foreigner feels that he is out of the running; that there is no place for him with the limitations imposed by his foreign background and his strangeness in the new land. This feeling crops out insistently, even in cases where the stranger is made to understand that he is welcome to the use of American advantages and conveniences. A short passage from Pupin’s account of his first feelings when he was about to enter Columbia University is particularly applicable to this point. He felt keenly his "social unpreparedness". "I asked myself, can Columbia College, the alma mater of men like Hamilton, Jay, Livingstone, and of many other gentlemen and scholars who guided the destiny of these great United States, afford to enroll a raw

27. Pupin, p. 53
Serbian immigrant among its students; train me, an uncouth employee of a cracker factory, to become one of its alumni?" 28 It is this sort of sentiment that makes the immigrant extremely hesitant about entering into the life of his new country; and that makes the process of adaptation a difficult one to get launched upon.

Here, again, it happens that the adaptation of the immigrant is greatly facilitated if he does not congregate with a group of his own alien people. This isolation, especially as it takes place in our larger cities, tends to encourage in them the naturally strong desire to cling to their inherited modes of thought and life, and to make the task of Americanizing them doubly difficult. The ambitious immigrant must break away from this sort of an environment; must throw off the barriers of inherited customs, and respond to the challenge of the higher type of civilization that America offers. To such as make this adaptation, the word America soon takes the form of Opportunity, and is understood in terms of incentive and room for soul expansion.

As was the case when he was learning the new language, the immigrant finds himself the victim of many surprises during the course of this adaptation to the new life. One "greenhorn" who had a letter to post was directed to deposit it in a red iron box fastened to a post on the sidewalk. Reaching the first box of that description, he took hold of a shining handle and gave it a sharp turn. It was the fire alarm, and a policeman who ran to him pointed out with some earnestness the difference between the fire alarm box and the receptacle for letters. Jacob Riis, who had never had any previous experience with elevators, was greatly distressed when he first used one. When

28. Pupin, p. 103
the immigrant lad had asked to see a certain official in the building, he was directed to a little room all made of iron, and the door was suddenly closed. Seeing no opening anywhere, he suspected foul play, and was about to seize the little culprit who had slammed the door, when the whole room, floor and all, began to ascend. After a moment of consternation, he recollected having read that the Americans had means of vertical transportation, and he was able then to adapt himself to the situation with good grace.

Ludwig Lewisohn is a Jew. But looking back over his first few years in America, he is able to see no great difference between his own responses to the demands of the new country, and the responses of his Aryan fellow immigrants. During his youth, spent in a southern State, he absorbed many of the moral and social conventions that are basic to the life of the average native-born American. "At the age of ten my emotional and psychical assimilation into the social group of which I was then a physical member was complete", writes Lewisohn. From the testimony of this man, and of Steiner, Mary Antin, Rose Cohen, and others, all of whom are of Semitic blood, it does not appear that the problem of adaptation is any more baffling for the Jew than for the Gentile. Even a Jewish mother, after a few month's residence in America, had so far shaken off her religious prejudices and ancient superstitions that she feared no evil consequences from letting one of her babies pose for a Christian picture -- a painting of the Nativity to go into a Boston Protestant church.

It is well that the immigrant does have the desire to cling closely to some of his old customs. Edward Bok feels that in many cases it is true, as it was in his own, that the foreign-born must hold

29. Lewisohn, p. 51
on to some of the ideas and ideals of the land of his birth -- for
adaptation to American demands does not mean that all of the old is
to be discarded. A wholesome love of the best that has been brought
from the mother country is a sort of balance-wheel to steady the
immigrant during his months of readjustment. Jacob Riis expressed
this same pride in the old country when he was asked by King Christian
of Denmark, about the Danes in America. "They are good citizens,"
was Riis's reply, "the better for not forgetting their motherland." 30

30. Riis, p. 429
CHAPTER TWO

American Institutions and Affairs
Our Immigration Methods and Practices

With the exception of two men, Mukerji, who first landed on the Pacific Coast, and Panunzio, who had no experience with immigration officials whatever as he swam ashore one night from an Italian sailing vessel anchored in New York harbor; all of the writers of the books that are being considered in this study, entered America through the New York gateway. It follows, therefore, that their experiences with the immigration officials were all of a very similar nature. And, as the supposition may be made that the experiences of this group of immigrants are roughly similar to those of the majority of immigrants, the comments are typical of the reactions of many.

The time of disembarkation, coming as it does as the climax to the long voyage, is a period of great stress and tension. There is always the uncertainty over whether admission will really be granted; there is the danger of deportation, of exclusion for some contagious disease perhaps contracted on the trip. And always there is the worry that in the rush of landing loved ones may be lost sight of, or friends of the voyage may be missed never to be found again. Such are the emotions that the immigrants who have recorded their histories ascribe to the "landing day".

The actual examination is a routine affair. With tickets fastened to caps and dresses, the immigrants pass between rows of uniformed attendants and under the portal of the vast hall where the final
judgment awaits them. Mechanically and with quick movements, they are examined for general physical defects and for the dreaded trachoma. From this first room, the newcomers then pass into passageways, in order that the inspectors may conduct their examinations the more expeditiously. Already a sifting process may have taken place; and children who clung to their mother's skirts have disappeared in the shuffle, families have been divided and those remaining intact cling to each other in a really tragic fear that they may share the fate of those previously examined and found wanting. On many of the faces the joy of anticipation that lighted the eyes all during the steerage trip has already given away to the pain and anxiety that tells that all has not gone well with the immigrant's prospects.

The average immigrant obeys mechanically, his attitude toward the inspectors being one of respect, not untinged with awe. They are the men who hold the fate of the immigrant in their hands, and the stranger is more than anxious that nothing shall occur to hinder or delay his passing of the portals into the land of hope that lies just beyond.

Dr. Steiner speaks of many of the malicious practices that were formerly indulged in by immigration officials; abuses which have now been abolished, thanks largely to his own activity in the matter. Ellis Island was once the scene of roughness. Cursing, intimidation and a sort of blackmail prevailed. Money changers were hopelessly corrupt; they would give in exchange for the precious horde of the immigrants, a few bright pennies that were sufficiently polished to deceive the unknowing stranger. Now arrivals who appeared to possess more money than the ordinary newcomer would be blackmailed into giving up a large
part of their savings, under the threat that they would not otherwise be admitted.

For the most part, the officials are now kind, fair and considerate. Michael Pupin was greatly distressed, as he approached the gateway, because he had only a few cents in his pocket. But he was candid and honest in talking to his inspector, and the man was enough of a judge of human nature to realize that the lad before him had the making of a good citizen in his heart, even though he did not have more than a few pennies in his pockets. Ribbany had similar misgivings when his turn came to be examined, but he, too, was treated humanely and with consideration.

Jacob Riis offers a suggestion for a forward step in the Immigration System, based upon his own experience. He advocates some sort of enrollment of the immigrants as they are passed through the inspection departments. It does not much matter for what the enrollment is taken -- for school census, for vaccination, for conscription, for anything that will serve as an excuse. "It is the enrollment itself that I think would have a good effect in making the man feel that he is counted on for something; that he belongs, as it were, instead of standing idle and watching a procession go by, in which there is no place for him", declares Mr. Riis, and adds pointedly, "the enrollment for voting comes too late. By that time he may have joined the looter's army".¹

The moment of greatest exaltation in the process of entering the United States comes to the immigrant when he has safely passed the last questioner. Then it is that he feels well repaid for all the deprivation and suffering and anxiety that the journey and the inspection

¹ Riis, p. 37
have entailed. Mukerji well describes the elation when he writer, "The very moment the immigration authorities gave me permission to enter the United States, I felt as though I were another man. The reverence that I felt for this country was so great that nothing short of falling on my knees and kissing the soil which I trod beneath my feet, would have sufficed to express my feelings".  

One experience of his admission rankled in the heart of young Pupin as he sat the first night in the Labor Bureau office, thinking over the happenings of the day. As he surveyed those of his fellow immigrants who were also waiting for work, he could not help wondering why they had been admitted without any trouble or special concession, while he had seemingly needed favors from the officials. He really felt that he was superior to most of the people about him, because of the ideals of worth and character that he had brought with him from his native Serbian village. But apparently the officials and cared nothing about these things, because they did not ask him a single question concerning his family, the history of his village or the history of the Serb race. He concludes, "My admission by a special favor was a puzzle and a disappointment to me, but it did not destroy the firmness of my belief that I brought to America something which the examiners were either unable or did not care to find out, but which, nevertheless, I valued very highly, and that was a knowledge of and a profound respect for, the best traditions of my race."  

2. Mukerji, p. 165  
3. Pupin, p. 41
Usually the first contact that the immigrant had with the police force or any of its members led him to think that the only phrase in the vocabulary of the blue-uniformed men was "Move on". As the poor wanderer -- too poor to buy his lodging -- would be lying on the park benches, trying to get a little rest, he would be aroused effectively and persistently, and told to move on and quit loafing. This would not always be done in an unkind way, but occasionally a sleeper would be brought to consciousness with a cruel rap on the soles of feet, such as brought young Panunzio his "first American cry".

Edward Bok has some strong indictments to bring against the American policeman. In the Netherlands, he says, a boy is taught that a policeman is a representative of law and order, and is therefore his best friend; the natural friend of every boy who behaves himself. "I came to America to be told that a policeman is a boy's natural enemy; that he was a being to be held not in respect, but in fear. His presence meant that we must 'stiffen up'; his disappearance meant that we might again 'let loose'."

Likewise, in the case of the immigrant, the policeman is not always the stranger's best friend, as he should and can be -- but rather an enemy. Steiner's first experience with a friendly policeman led him to realize what a great service every officer of the law could render to his country if he would only "be friends" with the foreigner. It is usually advice and sympathy, not chastisement, that the homeless

4. Bok, p. 440
immigrant needs, and all too often the help is not forthcoming. Pupin had his estimate of America vastly raised and idealized when a policeman, catching him in a fight with some street boys who had provoked him, heard his story, and treated him justly. The policeman has an opportunity to impress the immigrant for good or for evil, at the most receptive and impressionable time of his life in America.

It is with a sense of shame that we read how often the police system falls short in its duty to the immigrant. Not only do the police fail to help him, but they even prevent others from administering much-needed aid. In his later years in America, Dr. Steiner repeatedly snatched men from the doors of gambling-rooms, from fake labor agencies, and from greedy hotel runners, only to find himself unpleasantly involved with the police, and he usually got a curse, if not a clubbing for his pains. Panunzio once had a chance to test the stupidity of the average police officer. He, many years after his arrival, and by then a gentleman of culture, once chanced to stop for a few moment's wait on a park bench. A presumptuous officer came up and ordered him to "Move on"; and even when Mr. Panunzio courteously told him that he had just arrived and was waiting for a friend, the policeman would not listen. Being entirely within his rights, Mr. Panunzio refused to go and the officer, in a rage, took him to jail. Of course he was released at once, but the incident showed the stupid vanity of that particular officer; and the city of Boston was roused to a vigorous protest.

This contact with the jail was not the first that the Italian immigrant had received. During the early years of his residence, he was once thrown into jail for no greater offense than that of innocently
"bumming a ride on a train", and left there, without explanation or apology, for two entire days. Edward Steiner had even a more tragic experience with the gross inefficiency of the police system. Because he had been found with a group of men who were, entirely unknown to Edward, involved in some labor trouble, he was thrown into a filthy prison cell and left there for six weeks without a hearing; without even the slightest knowledge on his part as to why he had forfeited his liberty. Such are the circumstances that lead to the formation of the criminal immigrant class -- all through the culpable stupidity of the police system.

The Police Lodging Station is another institution with which scores of immigrants used to come into contact. Jacob Riis calls these stations the most horrible man-traps that the carelessness of man has ever allowed to exist. Under the pretext of furnishing lodging to poor wanderers, these asylums crowded scores of fighting, cursing, miserable human beings into the most cramped quarters, and "Never was parody upon Christian charity more corrupting to human mind and soul than the frightful abomination of the police lodging-house, sole provision made by the municipality for its homeless wanderers", is Mr. Riis's judgment. Fortunately this evil is now a thing of the past; but for many years it exerted a powerful and degrading influence upon the immigrant population that was forced, for one reason and another, to make use of its pretended accommodations.

But the comments upon the police system of America are not all unfavorable. Many were the occasions upon which the immigrants were able to feel the beneficent influence of American justice and equity at its best. And many have, like Mary Antin, as quoted in the passage

5. Riis, p. 74
below, realized that there is, in America, "liberty and justice for all". Mary had been called to testify against a bully who had terrorized the neighborhood in which she lived; and the simple and effective carriage of justice impressed her with tremendous force. "Nobody cringed", she wrote of the incident, "nobody bullied, nobody lied who didn't want to. We were all free and treated equally, just as it had said in the Constitution!"
A charge of great gravity has been made by numerous commentators against the general disrespect for law and authority to be found in America. This is an evil which takes the form not so much of flagrant disobedience to statutory law but of a prevalent disregard of constituted order. Edward Bok feels that a great weakness of the American people consists in their feeling that laws may be passed, but they should not be too rigidly enforced. The individual citizen does not feel it his duty to respect law in spirit as well as in letter, to the degree that he should. The result is a certain growing laxness of morale that does not augur any good for the future of the nation.

Similarly, Panunzio feels that one of his greatest losses in coming to America and assimilating American ways, was his loss of the feeling of respect and veneration for law and order that he had received as a natural part of his training in Italy. "I came in contact with people who mocked order, who defied and openly broke laws. Dignity had no place in life; liberty was a license, and vice seemed to be considered a virtue", he writes. 7 Herein lies one of the great shortcomings of the American people.

Lewisohn comments vehemently upon what he terms the lack of vigor in America's attitude toward law. When some seemingly needed reform suggests itself, the American people, instead of really fighting against the evil itself, direct all their attention to the passing of a law forbidding its practice — then once the law is on the statute

7. Panunzio, p. 135
books, the matter is entirely dropped. We are, says Lewisohn, too
prone to pin our faith in negative commandments — prohibitions — that
seek only to stop the wrong, not to develop a right attitude that
will overcome, in a natural way and at its source, the existing evil.
Pursuing this subject, he adds, "You must not drink fermented liquors,
you must not criticize your neighbor harshly, you must not act selfishly,
you must not doubt that America has achieved an unexampled freedom,
nor that the majority is right — and hence you must shun non-conformity
to the fundamental beliefs of the majority as undemocratic and un-
American." 8

Lewisohn, together with other critics, also finds an element of
danger in the eagerness of the American people to adopt new laws. He
sees no justification for the 18th Amendment, since national pro-
hibition was not a thing desired by all of the people of the common-
wealth. He ascribes the final succumbing of the necessary majority of
states, to a sort of weakness inherent in our thinking, that, in its
worship of majority opinion, forgets the distinctions of qualitative
considerations. It is too much, he thinks, a case of "follow the
leader". He fights the censorship laws, because he thinks it is a
case of putting too much power into the hands of a few not infallible
individuals, who have no right to destroy the work and wreck the
lives of other individuals simply because their ideas do not agree
with those of the censors.

One of the most unfortunate results of the failure to apply the
law justly to the cases in which immigrants are involved is the sub-
sequent breeding of a feeling of hatred for all law, in the heart of
the ill-treated foreigner. When Steiner was taken to his cell after

8. Lewisohn, p. 163
the episode cited in a previous chapter of this paper, he carried back with him "a fierce sense of injustice and a contempt for all law in the land and its officials; feelings which later ripened into active sympathy with anarchy". If this sort of thing is allowed to continue, one writer points out that in some great crisis, when this country needs men who respect her laws and love her institutions, multitudes of men who have suffered the injustices of poorly-administered laws, will fail her.

Nothing is ever lost by tempering justice with kindness. Panunzio speaks feelingly of one really human judge, whose clemency and sympathy did more to restore his waning faith in the fairness of American ways than had any other experience up to that time. In probably nine cases out of ten, the immigrant who transgresses a law does so unknowingly and entirely without any malicious intent. An understanding of this fact is especially necessary to administrators of the law, if anything like justice is to be dispensed. A writer who has had a large and varied experience with various American institutions states that he would rather take chances on receiving a just judgment from an American court than from perhaps any other American institution. "I believe", is Panunzio's comment, "that America can well afford in all matters of law, to let the immigrant have access to the courts of justice, rather than to leave him to the mercy of any other organization." 10

"The law's delay" is a characteristic of legal matters in practically all countries, and although American judicatory procedure is not marked by slowness, on the whole, there is no evidence of inefficiency in a matter of greatest importance to the immigrant -- that of naturalization. Many of the writers consulted in this study have

9. Steiner, p. 143
10. Panunzio, p. 269
found extreme embarrassment when it came to the securing of the final papers, because the American law requires that witnesses for the applicant must have known him continuously for five years. As most immigrants are more or less migratory during their first years in America, the problem of bringing in a witness able to testify in his behalf is often extremely difficult. Often two or three or more witnesses must be called in, at great expense and inconvenience to them and to the applicant for citizenship. The absurdity of the many delays imposed because of this technicality is apparent when one thinks of a young man trying his best for several years to become a citizen in order that he may perform his civic duties, and then being hindered in so many harassing ways, when the final step is to be taken.
For the immigrant who is not a mere child, the problem of educating himself to the new cultural standards that he finds in America is an absorbing one. Not in many cases does the youth try to enter at once into the public school system. He is loath to enter at the very beginning and be obliged to associate with children many years his juniors -- this is a situation from which any normal young person would shrink. But the immigrant realizes that he must learn in some way; and the various aids that he finds are of great interest to the native-born American.

Quite naturally, the night schools afford one of the most satisfactory means of improving himself. Here the immigrant will find associates of his own age and stage of adaptation to American life, and here -- supposedly, at least -- he will find the sort of instruction that is best suited to his requirements.

To many hundreds of immigrants, Cooper Institute, because of the help that it brought them in their time of need, is an object of deepest veneration. Early in his American career, Steiner was directed to Cooper Institute as a place where he could find some of the things for which he was hungering; and the classes in literature which he there attended were a powerful influence in his Americanization. Pupin also found much guidance and inspiration in the free classes which he was able to attend intermittently. Provision is made at this institution for both day and night classes, so that ambitious immigrants, whatever their means of livelihood, are able to spend some time of the
day or night there. One notable criticism has been directed against the manner of teaching employed at Cooper Institute, however. Too often the instructors, especially those engaged in teaching English to the motley group of foreigners, would forget that they were dealing with men who had toiled all day, and whose brains were likely to be sluggish. On this account, many of the pupils who enrolled soon lost interest and dropped out.

It is a revelation to the native-born American, who has lived all his life in the atmosphere of progressiveness and opportunity that is a part of nearly all sections of America, to learn of some of the factors that contribute to the immigrant's advancement, as he is seeking to become American in thought and outlook. Young Pupin derived a tremendous amount of inspiration and information from walking down the New York streets at night, looking into all of the store windows, reading the advertisements, seeing the displays, and thus keeping in touch with what was going on in the new world about him. Ribhany once purchased a small "History of the United States", and from the study of this simple textbook, he learned many of the things that were later to guide him into the ways of enlightened American citizenship. A short biography of Alexander Hamilton was for many months a guide and source of inspiration to another immigrant who was looking for the real meaning of American ideals and traditions. So, in a thousand ways, the alert immigrant is able to find ways and means of initiating himself into the thought-life of America, even without the aid of formal instruction. Lewisohn still treasures small editions of the "Scarlet Letter" and "Paradise Lost" that he bought, in the early years of his life in America, after a hundred deliberations,
brought home withinfinite keenness of delight, and then tasted and absorbed with a "high and almost austere rapture". We who have never had the thrill of these "first experiences", so appreciated because so dearly purchased, cannot but envy, in some respects, the freshness and vividness of the immigrant's initial impressions.

But by far the greatest cultural influence that the immigrant finds in America, is the contact that is so easily available with the best people of the nation. American democracy receives a high tribute from the pens of these immigrants who tell of the geniality and cordiality of even notable Americans whom the strangers approached with something of the awe of the European peasant for a member of the nobility. Young Bok, who became an enthusiastic collector of autographs in his effort to add to his education by becoming acquainted with the great men and women of the day, learned that they were interested enough in the immigrant boy to ask him to see them; and from these contacts, he absorbed an understanding of American ideals and traditions that stood him in good stead all the remainder of his life.

This personal association with good men and women was also a constant source of inspiration to the Syrian lad, Rihbany. "When I think," he writes, "of the thousand noble impulses which were poured into my soul in my early years in this country by good men and women in all walks of life, who taught me the lasting value of personal achievement and that America is not only the land of great opportunities but great responsibilities also, I feel that this, my America, is truly the queen of all nations." 11 Riis writes in a similar vein, "In my sojourn in this country, I have never lacked words of encouragement and inspiration which seemed to pour out from the heart of a

11. Rihbany, p. 278
nation whose spirit is friendliness and whose spirit is progress” 12

Even life in the slums is an education in itself to the foreigner who can live with open eyes and an understanding mind. Mary Antin, from her room on the second floor of a tenement house, looked out upon the life about her and learned many things that were not in the school books she was eagerly devouring at school. "Instruction poured into my brain at such a rate that I could not digest it all at the time but in later years the emphatic moral of my lessons became clear”, she records. 13

The public libraries, with their wealth of treasure for the immigrant who has learned to read in the new tongue, are a source of infinite delight and training to the avid seeker after new things. The simple words "Free Public Library” carry a magical significance that urges many an immigrant who would never spend much time on self-improve- ment in the old country, to explore the new institution, just because it is his; his because he is a member of a great free commonwealth. As Mary Antin exults, in speaking of this stimulus that came into her life, "It is wonderful to say 'this is mine' and 'this is ours'”.

Perhaps the chiefest aid in acquiring an education in America is just this inspiration to learn in order to be worthy of the country to which he has come, that animates the immigrant. He feels that if he is to take his part in the affairs of the nation, he must fit himself for a higher standard of thought and action than he brought with him to America; and it is this which enables him to find something of benefit to his progress in every new experience that comes to him.

12. Riis, p. 134
- Farm and Rural Life -

It happens often, in the experience of the immigrant, that one of his first contacts with the American people is with the farmer and with other residents of the rural districts. He meets people, to be sure, in the cities, but they are not, as a rule, people of any particular class. His city experience is confined largely to contact with policemen, common laborers, like himself, "bosses", and alien peoples; and from these he does not gain an insight into anything that is very typically American. Although, as has been stated previously, by far the larger percentage of immigrants land in New York, there are many thousands of the newcomers who, despairing of finding their place in the complex city life that they find about them, and longing for the simpler and less distracting environment to be found in the rural districts, quickly leave the cities, and make their way into the more thinly settled areas that surround, at no great distance, even the great metropolis, New York.

It is probable that in most cases in which an immigrant seeks the country life in preference to the urban, he has been a farmer himself in his native land; and so feels drawn to the more familiar environment. There are, however, many influences which tend to check this natural distribution. One which has already been mentioned in a previous chapter, is the fact that agricultural practices and equipment in America are far in advance of anything to be found in the Old World; a fact which results in keeping many immigrants who have been
farmers during their previous life, in the cities where they first began their American life. As Panunzio notes, even the Italian immigrants who have come largely from Italy's rural sections, find it hard to adapt themselves to American farm life, just because of the great difference in farm management. Instead they remain in the cities and are drafted or drawn into the "peck and shuvel", or excavation type of work, as it presents the nearest parallel to the kind of toil they have engaged in on their small and primitive Italian farms.

One of the most frequent comments made upon American farm life, is that it is dreary and monotonous. This, however, is a criticism that can in all probability be made of the rural sections of almost any country. Nevertheless there is special point to the observation, because America, in comparison with European countries, is many degrees more expensive. The result of this roominess is that farms are not found so close together as they are in Europe, and there is almost an entire absence of the sort of village life among our farmers that exists in Europe, where tracts are small enough to allow much greater intimacy of contact. And it follows closely upon this that the immigrant notices a more pronounced isolation in the American farm; a condition that makes it seem dreary, desolate, and almost entirely devoid of any social life.

Michael Pupin notes that in his early days in America, he wondered why it was that the farmers with whom he became acquainted seemed so devoid of all animation. But when he had observed this lack of community life among the farmers, he felt that he understood the cause of their apathy and mental sluggishness. To the Serbian youth, fresh from the village of Idvor, where the whole countryside was welded
together through the participation of all classes in a common social life, this condition seemed almost unendurable. A few days after he had gone to work on a Maryland farm, he observed that although the work was physically easy, the climate was deadly and the social life even more deadly. "The only interesting people I found", Pupin writes, "were buried in the old cemetery some two hundred years prior to that time; the only diversion I found was to read the legends on the tombstones in the old cemetery near the village church." After a term of this soul-killing existence, Pupin was glad to hurry back to New York, where he had landed from the immigrant ship, and which seemed to be seething with life and activity and brimful of all kinds of opportunities -- in absolute contrast to the uninviting farm life.

One aspect of American farm life, however, never failed to impress the new arrival favorably. No matter how poverty-stricken the farm might, from its outside appearance, seem to be, there was always at meal time what seemed to the European a veritable feast. To one reared in the strictest sort of economy, such as is practiced by the Continental peasant, the bountiful and sumptuous repasts on the American farm are a never-failing source of amazement.

The consensus of opinion among the immigrants who have known American farm life intimately is that the American farmer works harder than does his European cousin. There is not, in the Old World, the "everlasting driving to get things done in a hurry", as one writer phrases it, that is so characteristic an element of American productive industry, whatever the form may be. Young Steiner had, in his native country, had a thorough training in farm life; but when he came to America, he found a different type of work awaiting him. He says of

14. Pupin, p. 58
this, "The work on the farm was much harder than I had experienced, and, on the whole, required a kind of skill and endurance which I did not possess." 15

Steiner also found, in one phase of American farm life, an embodiment of the American spirit that struck him forcibly and impressively during his "greenhorn" days. "The first time I had a pitchfork in my hand", he writes, "I recognized in it a symbol of the Yankee spirit. I compared it with the clumsy affairs I had used in Europe. I noted how every bit of superfluous weight had been eliminated, and how thin and shapely were the prongs. Not even a skyscraper in later years aroused in me such admiration for the American, as did that hayfork." 16

The "farm-hand" is another typical American institution. Panunzio, Steiner, Riis and Rihbany all found the farm-hand present wherever they went; and in most cases these hands were ignorant foreigners, who like themselves, were willing to live in the sort of slavery that the American farmer imposed upon his help. In Europe there is a great deal more of cooperation among the farmers themselves, wherever there is some special task to be done, than can or does exist in America, and it is for this reason that the typical American farm-hand does not have an exact European counterpart.

The pay given these hands was usually shamefully low. Young Riis discovered this after he had worked his first week of fierce toil, to be rewarded with a mere pittance at the end of his time; and he came to the conclusion that "a man is not necessarily a philanthropist, it seems, because he tills the soil". He did not hire our again.

Often, when dealing with raw immigrants, the American farmer has proved

15. Steiner, p. 83
16. Ibid., p. 83
to be despicably dishonest and mercenary in his practices. Because it is easy to hoodwink and browbeat the unknowing "greenhorn", the farmer is too often inclined to get the very most that he can -- and for nothing. Panunzio had been working hard for several months, with his farmer employer, and had been promised $15 a month. But when the youth went to the farmer and demanded that he be paid, so that he could use his wages as he wished, he was sneered at, given five dollars, and told to get our if he didn't think that was enough. Such an experience as this is sufficient to enrage any honest individual; and to the youth who had been working faithfully, it was a heavy blow indeed. "It was as if the very earth had crumbled away under my feet", he says of the incident, which greatly delayed his proposed return to Italy. 17 "I was bitterly angry, I hated the man and I hated America with all of my soul. And as I think of the incident, I understand why 'foreigners' are so often suspicious, and why they often have so much cause to feel anything but admiration and love for America." 18

Steiner records a similar case, in which a poor Ruthenian had been exploited by a farmer who had kept him at work during eight months, and when the man had demanded wages, sent him away penniless. In this instance, however, justice was brought to bear, and the rascally farmer was forced to pay his victim, and pay him well, for his eight months of work.

Other cases of dishonesty among farmers have been recorded, in which the unscrupulous farmers have used the ignorant immigrants as tools to carry out various nefarious business schemes, such as doubtful enterprises, robbery, boot-legging, and other types of malfeasance. The tragedy of this condition is that usually the immigrant, when

17. Panunzio, p. 111
18. Ibid., p. 111
caught in this innocently-committed wrong doing, is unable, because he has no friends and cannot express himself adequately in English, to obtain justice.

Withal, there is a certain dignity and uprightness about the representative American farmer, that enables him to rank high among the classes of American people. Panunzio, for all of his early disappointments, eventually came to know an American farmer who represented, to him, the highest type of American; of genuine goodness and dignity, shrewd, kindly, possessing a keen sense of humor, and enduring patience and tenacity of purpose -- a typical "Uncle Sam".

Pupin, also, concludes that the American farmer is a man of strong and sturdy character. His dignity and self-respect forbid him to kowtow to any city "swell"; he has but one demand of men, acts, not promises. In a tribute to American rural life, this writer says of the farm that is now his American home, "I have never had a desire to seek a better haven of happiness in any other place, either here or in Europe, than my Norfolk farm." 19

19. Pupin, pp. 326-27
It is in the smaller communities, such as may be called "villages" or "towns" rather than cities, that American life is seen in perhaps its most characteristic phases. There are, in the United States, thousands and thousands of these communities, ranging in size from five hundred to five thousand population, that present, to the newcomer, the same general physical aspect, the same forms of social and community life, and the same ideals and tendencies.

Commentators remark repeatedly upon the "standardized" form of these American villages. Steiner speaks, in one passage describing the town in which he made his home for several months, as follows: "The town was like countless others dotting the Middle West. It had its courthouse square flanked by the usual variety of stores, its few hundred houses, and about two thousand people who lived together, still fairly unconscious of class distinctions". It being the case that towns of this general description are so plentiful, and so monotonously alike, the immigrant observes often that, while it is true everywhere that an ordinary town means nothing unless one has a friend in it, it is particularly true of the average town of the Middle West that it offers little of interest. "Each", says Steiner, "is a miniature Chicago, with its monotonous business streets, its more or less pretentious residences. The towns in America beautiful for situation are rare, and those of some historic interest, rarer still." 20

Rihbeny finds something greatly to admire, however, in this

20. Steiner, p. 231
uniformity of the American town. After he had lived for a number of years in a rather large center of population, he moved from the city to study some of the smaller communities. "I was curious to know", he records, "how the smaller towns of America would impress me. Would they be as insignificant and as wanting in enterprise and culture, compared to those large cities, as the Syrian towns, compared with Babylon, Bayrout, and Damascus? I was rapturously amazed to find every small city and town to be a New York on a smaller scale." 21 Each town seems, to the fresh observer, to have its "Main Street" and "Washington Street". Each has its town hall, post-office, banks, newspaper, schools, and churches -- evidences of animation and enterprise that are sources of continual surprise to the immigrant who comes from the more sluggish countries of Europe and Asia. When Rihbany observed, in the typical American town, the home libraries, the musical instruments, the pictures on the walls, and "above all, that idealism which makes the American woman after doing her housework, 'dress up for the afternoon', dash a little powder on her nose and turn to her books or her piano", 22 he did not feel that there was ground for any fear as to the future of a nation that was removed this far, in its most intimate daily life, from anything that savored of "crass materialism". Very often it has been noted by critics of every type, that the average American town is somewhat lacking in an adequate civic interest. Edward Bok notices this lack. He lived, during the years of his work in Philadelphia, in a suburb of the Quaker City, Merion; a community that was the home of many successful business men like himself. But they had no interest in the civic affairs of their community. Taking the motto, "To be nation right and State right, we must first be
community right", the Dutch immigrant set out to remedy this apathy with regard to Merion's civic affairs on the part of its residents. Through his efforts a Civic Association was formed, and, in spite of the initial discouragements that met the experimenters, so great was the ultimate success of this project for improving civil, economic and social interests in a typical American small town, that a few years later, no less a student of American institutions than Theodore Roosevelt pronounced Merion "a model in all civic matters". The effect of this experiment was far-reaching, as its success attracted nation-wide attention, and it is certain that the efforts of this one man have had a tremendous influence for the good, in the matter of American town management.

After Pupin had become a landowner in Norfolk, Connecticut, he began to attend the town meetings which were an important part of this, as of every other New England town's management. "Here, for the first time", writes Pupin, "I became acquainted by personal contact with the fundamental elements of Anglo-Saxon civilization. These town meetings, with their free and open discussion of every problem vital to the residents of the community, represent one of the most admirable phases of the American democracy." 23

It was Lewisohn's lot to spend his first few years in America, in a small southern town. Here, while he found many things that he severely censured in later days, he also found much that was of great value to him in his efforts to adapt himself to the new land. The people of the village were, on the whole, kindly, and "as far as their light went," liberal. This was well exemplified by the position of the Jews in the village. Of these there were about ten families, all

23. Pupin, p. 327
recent immigrants, and so aliens in speech, race and faith. Yet between them and these Southern villagers there was no lack of harmony, the relations were hearty and pleasant, and consolidated by mutual kindness and tolerance. The people of the village were, Lewisohn found, of very mixed descent. Of the storekeepers, a few retired farmers, three physicians, three or four lawyers, and others of the residents, most were of foreign extraction. English, Scotch-Irish, French, Dutch, and even some Scandinavian strains were present and plainly discernible.

Rihbany, also, notes this free friendliness and hospitality that is all the more striking in American village life because of its almost complete absence in American city life. When he had been a resident of a small Massachusetts village for a few months, he realized that "American friendliness and hospitality were never found so freely and so abundantly bestowed upon a stranger as in that little city".

It is to be supposed, of course, that there are some very serious failings to be found in American village life. Panunzio, at one time of his career, was ready to vouch for the fact that there is just as much wickedness and sin and misery in the American village as in the slum districts of the greatest city. But this was due largely to the fact that his first experience with a small town was a particularly unfortunate one. He came later to modify his view, and to feel that in spite of numerous exceptions, the village usually presents American life at its best. However, it cannot be granted that the city is the abode of wickedness and vice, while the country and village life is free from temptations of this sort. One writer states as his conclusion, that some of the "lowest microbes of our national life may be found in

24. Rihbany, p. 302
our villages, where the town-loafer is but an indication of all manner of gluttonous, gambling, prostituting, and other evil practices that go on under the cloak of apathy and artlessness”.

Riis has had a great deal of experience with evil men, both in city and country life, and he feels that in nine cases out of ten, the "city-tough" is not so culpable an individual as the "country-tough". Very often the former is only a lad whose impulses are normal, but whose resources have been smothered by the slum, and who has been made a ruffian, or a semi-ruffian, by the street and its lawlessness. But the country hoodlum is more often a vagabond because of natural inclination; though it must be conceded that he, too, is often the victim of circumstances rather than of innate wickedness.

"Town-booming" is another distinctly American trait, and it is confined chiefly to the smaller cities. Lewisohn's uncle and aunt had preceded his own family to America; and they had sent the "St. Marks Herald" to his father, still in Berlin. He, not understanding the art and vocabulary of town booming as practiced in America, nor the society items of an American village newspaper, assumed that St. Marks was a town of some considerable importance. Needless to say, something of a disillusionment awaited him upon his arrival in a very ordinary village that had been so exaggeratedly praised in the columns of its paper.

Lewisohn, for all of his rebel tendencies, and his proneness to find little else but fault with all American institutions, still pays one tribute to this small, quiet village in South Carolina. Today, were he to go back to it, he would find nothing there to interest him. "But I know that in the early nineties of the last century", he writes, "there lingered in that village -- as there doubtless did in many other
places -- something of that honest simplicity, that true democratic kindliness which we like to associate with the early years of the primitive Republic". 25

Also in a commendatory vein is the description that Steiner gives of a "little college town where I discovered the real and the less known America". Although the town had been put down into a flat, uninviting, uninspiring landscape, it did give brave men a chance to build a community in which to realize their ideals, a college through which to propagate them, and a church wherein to keep them vitalized by a contact with God. "Great men lived there, unconscious of their greatness, asking no other reward than the approval of their conscience". 26 This, we may hope and believe, is typical of Americans in the representative American village.

25. Lewisohn, p. 54
26. Steiner, pp. 244-45
It is to be expected that the expression most frequently called forth, from the immigrant, in regard to American city life, is that of amazement at the tremendous complexity and multifariousness of a large city's resources and activities. Even the native-born American who has lived all of his life in this country, cannot, at times, conceal a sense of awe at what he beholds in the city; hence it is not to be wondered at that the raw immigrant finds much in New York and Chicago to dazzle his senses.

Such magnificent sights met Mary Antin's view as she enjoyed her first ride through New York City, going from the immigrant ship to the quarters that her father had already made ready for his newly-arrived family, that she could scarcely contain herself for amazement and delight. Only the chiding of her father that she was acting too much like a "greenhorn" sobered her. Every immigrant hates this term, which brands him as yet a stranger, and as a rule he bends every effort to the task of adapting himself to the new ways, in order that he may outgrow the opprobrium.

Forty years after his first glimpse of New York, Edward Steiner was able to remember the fashionably dressed crowds, the carriages and liveried coachmen, the magnificent residences, and the myriad other evidences of the city's greatness, as clearly as though this first sight had been only a week-old experience. Many years after, in fragments of his early correspondence with friends at home, Rihbany found recorded many impressions of New York which had puzzled his
unacclimated brain. To one friend in Syria he wrote in this fashion: "New York is three cities, on top of one another. The one city is in the air -- in the elevated railways whose trains roar overhead like thunder, and in the amazingly lofty buildings. The second city is on the ground where huge armies of men and women live and move and work. The third is underground where I find stores, dwellings, machine shops and even railroad trains." 27

The American city is, as has been suggested, much more cold and cruel and heartless in its treatment of the poor and the alien than are the smaller centers of population. This phase of the city's influence is the one which most forcibly struck young Lewisohn as he was approaching New York City, to seek therein fame and fortune. He stood on the deck of the ship, watching the approaching shore line, and on that day, coming as he did from the bland and familiar South and from a life that had touched reality but feebly, New York's Westside seemed stark, brutal, almost ferocious.

This same aloofness and unbending sternness has been noticed by many scores of writers. Many an immigrant who has, for a time, been trying to discover the real America through his residence in a large city, has been obliged to give up the quest. Mukerji saw, in the large city, a multitude of Irish, Italians, Poles, Russians, Chinese, and other human elements which make up the population there, but he was continually asking himself, "Where are the Americans?" His conclusion was that in a cosmopolitan city like New York, Chicago, Pittsburg or any others of similar size and characteristics, it is well-nigh impossible for the poor foreigner to come into any sort of helpful contact with its real American families. He therefore determined to

27. Ribbeny, p. 202
leave the great city and seek the smaller communities, where men
came into friendly touch with one another daily. He felt, as do
thousands of other immigrants, that he had not come to America merely
to enter into its soulless rush for commercial and materialistic su-
premacy, as exemplified in the feverish activity of the large city.
What he most felt the need of was a contact with American ideals,
thought life and feeling, and to find this he left the big city.

A characteristic phase of American city life, is the laxity and
looseness of family life. This appears especially in the families
not of native-born Americans -- though it exists there also -- but of
foreign-born people who have settled in the United States and have
"become Americans". This sad process of disintegration of the home
life among the foreign element of our city life is, Mary Antin thinks,
a part of the process of Americanization. It is an upheaval preceding
a state of repose. In the native country, children of immigrants
have been trained, watched, regulated, and guided according to fixed
prescriptions of conduct. And in America, once they have come to the
new country, they are suddenly allowed to run free on the streets.
This is because the parents, owing to the process of readjustment with
which they are concerned, know not what to do with the children, except
that they want them to become like American children; and seeing that
their neighbors give their children boundless liberty, they release
their own also, never doubting that the American way is the best way.
Often, too, this weakening of family organization is brought about by
the fact that parents are forced to take the law from their children's
mouths; for they, with their less intimate contact with American ways,
have no means of finding out what is good "American form" than from
their children.

Perhaps the greatest single problem of every large city is its slum problem; and, from its very nature, this is one which borders closely upon the affairs of the immigrant. By far the larger percentage of the inhabitants of the slum districts are foreign-born people; immigrants who have arrived in America with high hopes of soon attaining financial independence, only to be forced by lack of work, poor pay, and innumerable other difficulties, into the wretched poverty and misery of the tenement-house existence.

The congestion found in the tenement districts of the large city constitutes its greatest danger. Panunzio records of one part of the city of Boston, in which he worked at one time, that within the narrow limits of one-half square mile, were crowded together thirty-five thousand people, living tier upon tier, huddled together until the very heavens seemed shut out. This situation is typical of scores of others to be found in every metropolis. Under conditions such as these the immigrant must live and grow, if he can in any way manage to do so, into a good American citizen. Practically all observers who have written of immigrant life, dwell with great detail upon the prevalence and the evil of the slum problem; it is entirely too large a subject to be discussed with any degree of detail in the present paper. Suffice it to say that this phase of city life is commonly counted the greatest obstacle in the way of the assimilation of the immigrant. Not only are all of the constructive forces of American society absent from this sort of community, but also some of its very worst features seem to have been systematically introduced into the neighborhood, to prey upon the people in their all too apparent helplessness. When we read
Steiner's graphic description of the horrors of the slum district of New York, as contained in the opening pages of the fifth chapter of his autobiography; or follow the complete story of the fight to do away with the slums that is contained in Riis's life story, it becomes immediately apparent that here is the very worst feature, from the standpoint of the immigrant at least, of American city life.

American cities are not, as a rule, cities of beauty. To the immigrant who has just come from the quaint, quiet, and Old World beauty of the larger cities of Europe, such a sight as that presented by the average American city is one that inspires anything but esthetic admiration. An entanglement of railroad tracks, a skyline assaulted by gigantic buildings of no architectural uniformity or symmetry, blocks and blocks of crowded, dingy houses -- such is often the first view of an American city. "To me", writes Steiner, "the first outlook upon any fairly large American city seems forbiddingly, hopelessly ugly and pitiless".28 And when the city is penetrated in as far as the tenement districts, the sights are even more appalling to the eye. Mary Antin describes the ghettos of Boston in words that present a vivid picture of the unattractiveness of the scene: "Its multifarious business bursts through the narrow shop doors and overruns the basements, the sidewalk, the street itself, in push-carts and open-air stands. Its multitudinous population bursts through the greasy tenement doors, and floods the corridors, the doorsteps, the gutters, the side-streets, pushing in and out among the push-carts, all day long and half the night besides." 29

But, after all, contact with the seamy side of city life has

28. Steiner, p. 161
29. Antin, p. 287
been the means of bringing about much good. Had not Riis suffered 
his early misfortunes at the hands of the obnoxious police stations, 
they might still exist to pollute the immigrant life of a great 
city; but he was roused to combat, because of his own sufferings, 
and did not rest until the evil was abolished. And once, after a 
narrow escape from the clutches of a vicious red light district, 
young Steiner and a companion, with a devout "By Grace we are saved", 
pledged themselves to help stir the conscience of the community so 
that future immigrant lads might find real friends outside of the 
brothel and the saloon.

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In view of the fact that America has often been accused of extreme commercialism and materialism, it is of great interest to note what immigrant writers have to say about our business and industrial methods.

Neither Panunzio nor Pupin, both of whom express themselves very forcibly upon this subject, give much credence to the charge of gross commercialism, so often levied against these United States. It is freely granted that American business life is carried on in an intense manner, that competition is keen and sometimes merciless; and that the American business man is efficient, powerful and swift in his actions. But this does not necessarily argue that idealism is entirely lacking in American business life. At one time a certain immigrant, who had come to this country with lofty ideals and great dreams of doing marvellous things some day, was brought sharply to earth by an American business man. The newcomer had made a short talk to a committee in charge of some immigrant welfare work, in which he had outlined some of the things he planned to do when conditions were right. At the close of the meeting, one of the Americans who was an intimate friend of the speaker, said to him, "I am tired of hearing you talk about what you are going to do. Your ideals are all right, but how about the practical working out of them. Why don't you get down to 'brass tacks' and tell us what you have already done?"

This attitude was an eye-opener to the foreigner, and he gradually

30. Panunzio, p. 288
came to the conviction that one of the outstanding characteristics of American life is its practicability, not the less idealistic, but rather a type of practical idealism. It is this that is the dominant tone of American business life -- a stern practicality that is nevertheless animated by a certain idealism that saves it from too gross a taint of materialism.

When Pupin, after the invention of his famous "Pupin Coil", had dealings with American financiers and business men, he came forth from the experience with nothing but admiration for American methods. He was fairly well acquainted with the trading transactions of his native land; and when he remembered the never-ending bartering and haggling over prices that characterized the business dealings there, he was all the more amazed at the quiet and swift efficiency of the American method, by which a transaction involving many thousands of dollars was consummated in a very short time, without any devious arguing over the matter. The author cites a similar instance, in which he was the American agent of the Serbian government, charged with the purchase of five thousand tons of lard for his native country. The contract, involving a million dollars, was closed in less than thirty minutes; and the Serbian commissioners assured Pupin that a like transaction in Belgrade would have required at least a month.

Edward Bok makes the somewhat surprising observation, taken from his own personal experience, that in spite of the keenness of competition in American business circles, there is a very low average ability in those who are workers in the industrial system. When young Bok, fired with ambition to succeed in his business career, looked at the top of the ladder, he was amazed to find that instead of its being
overcrowded, there were surprisingly few who had reached the highest rungs. The top seemed fairly to beg for more to climb its heights. This is owing, he thinks, to the spirit of half-heartedness manifested by the average wage-earner. There was an unwillingness to do any "overtime" work; business interests were never allowed to interfere with any anticipated pleasure or personal engagement; the work was never thought of outside of working hours. Here, Bok feels, is the great failing of young Americans who are employed in the business world. This opinion, coming from a man who has had thousands of men and women working for him since the time when he was himself an aspiring employee, carries a great deal of weight.

Ludwig Lewisohn, not being the type of individual who finds his place in the business scheme, feels that nothing good can be said for the American industrial system. For several years, during his early manhood, he was employed by a large publishing firm, and he came out from the experience with a feeling that it was simply a life of degradation. The "get-together" luncheons for the employees were to him only empty forms of enthusiasm for the "ill-gotten gains of Singleton and Leaf". The feeling of pride, in the employees, over the greatness and prestige of the firm, Lewisohn could regard only as a servile sort of debasement, that exchanged the individuality of the employee for a made-to-order manner of thinking and acting. He writes, with regard to the American young man's desire to advance himself in a material way, "When former students of mine tell me that they are 'making good' with this or that corporation, and boast of the power and wealth of these corporations, a sense of bleakness fills me. The humble digger of the earth may be a slave in body; the young
engineer or business man who furthers the interests of his master is a slave in soul." 31

One of the major complaints of the immigrant against the American business system is that he, along with scores of men of his type, is not given a fair chance in the industrial world. And herein lies a great obstacle in the way of Americanization. When the foreign workman feels that he is not being fairly treated in his daily occupation -- the work that keeps him alive and makes possible all else -- he is not going to take kindly to any efforts that may be made to bring him into closer sympathy with American ideals. Factory employees who have been victimized to a greater or lesser degree feel that the ideals of democracy which social workers may be trying to inculcate in them, do not agree with the undemocratic way in which they are treated at their work. One social worker was forced to make this complaint to his American committee: "The workmen say that they do not receive enough wages to keep them in decent existence; some of them say that a portion of their wages is being taken from them weekly by the boss. Under these circumstances I find it exceedingly difficult to teach them our American principles." 32

Some ground must be granted to those who maintain that the emphasis placed upon business success, in America, is too great in proportion to that given to other less materialistic interests. Lewisohn complains bitterly that in his college there were "charming buildings for the school of veterinary medicine, agriculture, engineering, domestic science, chemistry, and forestry; the ancient arts and studies of man that give wisdom and vision were only squeezed in somehow." 33

31. Lewisohn, p. 138
32. Panunzio, p. 209
33. Lewisohn, p. 166
Pupin also found that his progress in developing some new electrical appliances was greatly retarded, at one period, by some big financiers interested in the electrical industries. That such influences as those mentioned should permeate even the educational world, is greatly to be deplored.

The great danger, then, is that the American business man is prone to become so engrossed in his own affairs that he forgets the finer things of life that should be developed along with the materialistic interests. That is why the business man so often is unable to discontinue his work, even when he is too old to conduct it properly. He must "die in the harness", simply because he has no other intellectual interest to which to turn. Bok solved this problem for himself, and he thereby suggests the way in which American business life may be placed upon a higher place -- a plane which recognizes that, after all, the accumulation of worldly goods and successes is not the primary end of man.
- Political Practices -

It is the general opinion of impartial observers that the average American is woefully ignorant, misinformed, and lacking in interest in regard to matters of voting, and political issues. When Edward Bok had arrived at what he felt to be the most vital point of his life in America, when he was about to become an American citizen and exercise the right of suffrage, America offered him no slightest help. Not until he had visited six different municipal departments was he able to learn whether, as a foreign born man but the son of a naturalized father, he was entitled to vote. When he decided to read up on party platforms, he could find nowhere any reliable literature on the subject. And when he sought to find out what a vote actually meant, by going to the headquarters of the political parties, he was regarded with puzzled looks: "Why, on Election Day you go up to the ballot box and put your ballot in, that's all there is to it", was the only reply he could get. Bok eventually found out all that he wanted to know, but it cost him a great amount of time and trouble. He wonders how many of the foreign-born will go to such lengths to acquire the information; and asks if America does not fall lamentably short in this phase of Americanizing her subjects.

Steiner's first witnessing of an American election gave him an opportunity to see American politics at what he felt was their worst. Interesting, but not very convincing, were the parades, the crash of brass bands, and the no less noisy political orators; while the open-
handed bribery and corruption did not materially increase his respect for the country. The young immigrant had always had visions of the ballot-box -- the symbol of American democracy -- as something entirely beautiful and sacred. But the reality of the situation disgusted him. Instead of being holy enough to be beautiful, and precious enough to be protected carefully, the ballot box proved to be a mean looking receptacle wedged in between a barber shop and a saloon; with the worst element of the community seeming to have charge of its affairs -- but not, by any means, guarding its purity.

Moved by an intense desire to find his place as soon as possible in the American scheme, Rihbany, soon after his arrival in the United States, entered whole-heartedly, if somewhat blindly, into the political campaign then in full swing. He did some "stump-speaking" on his own initiative, and on the night of the election, joined the immense crowd assembled to hear the reports. "Here again", he writes, "I was happily amazed at the orderliness of the stupendous gathering of people, which seemed to me a glorious vindication of liberty". 34

He felt afterward that, unintelligent and superficial though his interest in this campaign was, it nevertheless had an enlarging effect upon him. It was his first great incentive to ask questions about and to idealize the possibilities of American citizenship.

Lewisohn comments pointedly upon the situation that many other critics have also dwelt upon -- the proneness of American electors to appoint men in no way qualified for the work they are attempting to secure. In one case, when a mayor was to be elected for a city of some two hundred thousand inhabitants, whose government entailed many intricate administrative, educational, and engineering problems,

34. Rihbany, p. 237
four men were nominated. A printer, a business man, a chief of police, and a bank official, were the nominees, and not a single one of them had any knowledge of engineering, educational, or civic matters. They simply had no equipment for the office to which they aspired. Yet in all of their speeches and proclamations they made the same inane assertions -- they would give the city an honest administration, no graft; they would give the voters a clean city; they would give an economical and efficient administration. All of this, Lewisohn admits, is commonplace criticism. But he came upon the situation with a certain freshness, an innocence, and an ability to be shocked by the brazen and meaningless clatter of it all. His conclusion is this: "The purpose of political government in the affairs of cities is to deceive the commonalty and fortify and extend the power of the privileged classes." 35 The great trouble, he points out, is that the average American does not take political matters seriously enough; he does not think for himself. "The actual political supineness of Americans, their extreme suggestibility, and their utter carelessness as to the quarters whence their winds of doctrine blow", 36 constitute the great menace to American political life, this writer feels.

The advent of what is familiarly known as "graft" has been the means of limiting the power of many of our institutions. Bok feels that the greatest weakness in America's public school system is the prevalence of political methods in the administrative departments. Attempts to establish social welfare work are often frustrated by the interference of scheming politicians, who would rather have the masses of immigrants remain ignorant, in order that they may the more

35. Lewisohn, p. 184
36. Ibid., p. 210
easily make use of them in illegal ways. Riis found that he could not serve any political party and accomplish the good that he was intent upon bringing about in the slum district.

However, it is hopeful to note that since the majority of the above cited criticism of the American political machine has been made, there has been a decided change for the better. Many of the greater abuses have been entirely eliminated; there remains yet only the necessity of bringing a still higher idealism into American politics.
Politeness of the extremely urbane and formal type is not a prominent characteristic of American life. But this lack is one which is little to be deplored; for in place of this shallow, ostentatious, and often meaningless display, America offers a wholesome heartiness that rests upon a far more solid basis than merely formal courtesy does. One writer, Lewisohn, found a trace of this empty politeness in the attitude of certain club members, whose meetings he once attended. They treated him with finished courtesy, but he could realize that there was no heart in it. They were interested only in "things", and condescended to Lewisohn's interests of art and learning, solely for the sake of being polite.

The immigrant's contacts with real American life tend, on the whole, to convince him that genuine, heart-felt, kindness, the kindness that is above sham and vain pretense, is deep-rooted in our nation. Because he showed his intense veneration for American traditions, Pupin won the sympathy of immigration officials at Castle Garden, who, had they been less kindly, might have deported the lad because of his poverty. The deserving immigrant usually finds kind treatment at the hands of his American acquaintances. When Riis was literally starving on the streets of New York, a burly, but none the less kindly cook at Delmonico's used to supply the lad with meat-bones and rolls whenever his ravenous face appeared at the basement
window. Rihbany, though of an extremely alien race, found, at every juncture, that America has a big heart; so that the occasions on which he was made to feel that he was a "foreigner" were rare indeed. "The large, warm heart of America", he writes, "which opens wide to every person who aspires to be a good and useful citizen, made me forget that there was any 'immigration problem' in America." ¹

When Rihbany was trying, through a study of a history of the United States, to acquire a knowledge of his new country, kindly fellow-boarders were ever ready to aid him in his efforts. "As typical Americans, they believed in encouraging a beginner, in 'helping a fellow along'", ² is the grateful comment of this writer -- a comment which voices the appreciation of many other immigrants. This helping hand, seems to have been ever extended to the immigrant whenever he was particularly in need of it. Three separate times, when young Steiner had been so buffeted by adverse circumstances that he was almost ready to give up, he was saved by some manifestation of what he calls the "true American kindliness".

Even the great people of America, Edward Bok discovered during the process of gathering his famous autograph collection, are kindly, sympathetic, and approachable. And, at the other extreme of the social scale, is the wonderful kindness so often manifested by even the poorest and humblest people. Mukerji once worked as waiter in an establishment where there was a poor, hard-working, colored cook. She noticed, one day, that the immigrant lad needed a new pair of shoes, and insisted upon lending him the money with which to buy a new pair. And it was an Irish errand girl who once shared her meager lunch with young Steiner, giving him a new lease on life through her kindness as

¹ Rihbany, p. 278
² Ibid., p. 282
much as through the food given to him.

The Lewisohn family, newly arrived and nearly helpless for the first few months, received daily attentions and donations from warm-hearted neighbors -- tokens of good will that eased the hard road to an amazing degree. And in the country, as well as in the city, this American spirit of generosity is repeatedly observed. Pupin, Steiner and Panunzio speak often of the kindness of farm women for whose husbands the immigrants worked during their first days in America. Their solicitude for the physical and mental well-being of the strangers was often the means of starting the lads on the road to a true understanding of the new country.

Dr. Steiner gives ample evidence of the innate and prevalent kindness of the American people when he speaks of the tramp situation here. It is just because men and women are so kind that tramps are so numerous in America; and Dr. Steiner adds that the most crabbed pessimist might be cured of his disease by being thrust out into the tramp world. The tramp knows better than perhaps any other class of individual, just how much kindness there is in America, for it is through this kindness and because of it, that he is able to live as he does.
Manners and Customs of Daily Life

Americans have often been accused of haste and extravagance in the conduct of their daily affairs, and this trait has not escaped the notice of the commentators whose works are being studied for this paper. Panunzio feels that one of his greatest losses, in becoming Americanized, was the change in his attitude in the matter of thoroughness and exactness in work. He brought with him certain Old World ideals of carefulness and exactness in all forms of work; but once he became caught in the fast-revolving wheel of American life, he began to lose this choicest heritage of his former life. Especially did he notice this attribute of American life during his college years. Students seemed to place a premium upon speed, upon doing the most rather than the best work. And in our larger cities, the immigrant searches in vain for "the least sign of that sense of the beautiful, that refinement, that leisureliness, that culture, that courtesy of manner so typical of Italy and the Italian." 3

Bok voices the same complaint. "The two infernal Americanisms, 'That's good enough' and 'That will do', were taught me, together with the maxim of quantity rather than quality", 4 he writes, and adds that the admirable Dutch qualities of thoroughness and persistence are not to be found in this country.

Closely akin to this matter of constant haste, is that of extravagance. The thrifty European peasant who comes to this country is often utterly amazed at the waste and prodigality that he sees about him.
America is not the land of economy, if we are to believe these observers. Mary Antin's mother could scarcely believe her eyes the first time she saw the contents of the neighbor's garbage pail. It contained enough good food to have supplied, if properly prepared, the entire Antin family for a week. Similarly, Edward Bok remarks that, in later years, when he saw, daily, a scow loaded with the garbage of Brooklyn householders being towed through New York harbor out to sea, it was an easy calculation that what was thrown away in a week's time from Brooklyn homes, would feed the poor of the Netherlands for a similar time.

Freedom is another characteristic of all forms of American life. Freedom not only of thought and religion, but also of movement. It is always something of a shock to the immigrant, to discover how fluid and mobile is American life. People here think nothing of moving about from one section of the country to another; of going from city to rural districts, of breaking up a home in one part of the Union to reestablish it in another. This criticism applies to representative Americans -- of course there are many exceptions. One writer explains this characteristic on the grounds that life for the average American is a great adventure. He is not bound down to one place by an ancient family line, as is so often the case in Europe. Americans do not hesitate to leave the old for the new, especially if they see in the new an advantage of any kind or degree. Panunzio, for one, thinks that in this freedom of movement, and in this mobility, there is a great advantage, and he says of it, "I have adopted it as the first plank, I might call it, of my American philosophy of life." 5

It is to be expected that along with the great degree of freedom

5. Panunzio, p. 280
the American enjoys, there should be a certain degree, a certain suggestion of lawlessness -- of too great liberty. American manners are characterized, as a whole, by an absence of any deep respect for law and order of any kind. Early in his life in America, the immigrant comes in contact with rough and uncouth people, men and women who know little refinement of speech, of bearing, or of manners; who often take pride in mocking order, in defying law, and in making a parade of their feeling of liberty. It is to be feared that dignity has too small a place in American life; and it is certain that there is much to be wished for in our regard, as a nation, for the beneficent qualities of respect, courtesy, quietness of behavior, and reverence, "where reverence is due".

Many writers find in the position of woman in American life, a subject worthy of extended comment. The predominance of women in domestic and social affairs seemed to Ribbany, when he first came into close touch with American society, a strange and unnatural phenomenon; for he had spent his early youth in Syria, where woman has no social standing whatever. Pupin was fortunate in meeting, early in his American career, a refined American woman, who explained to the newcomer, the position of the American woman as the educator and spiritual guide of the coming generation, emphasizing the fact that the vast majority of teachers in American primary schools were women. Even in the rural districts, where the position of women is much less exalted than it is in more cultured centers, the immigrant finds that the American wife and mother occupies a far larger place in the daily life of the home, the neighborhood and the community, than she does in Europe.

Mary Antin speaks with particular approbation of the American
custom which promises to every girl "a long girlhood, a free choice in marriage, and a brimful womanhood, which are the precious rights of an American woman". 6 She sees in this one of the greatest influences for good that is to be found in American life. When American girls can avoid the Old World fate of an early marriage that means utter loss of independence, and a dull, dreary future, devoid of intellectual interests, the outlook for the future of the nation is a bright one.

Not so flattering are some of the observations of Lewisohn upon American manners and customs of daily life. To this writer, one of the characteristic qualities of Americans is their mental sluggishness, and their lack of firm, and clean-cut convictions. This he calls an "infinitely curious characteristic -- the easy-going, kindly, disastrous dislike of definite individual convictions." 7 He sees this trait in the typical social gathering. Everyone comes, ostensibly, to have a good time, but there is so much meaningless chatter, so much empty boisterousness, and so little genuineness and sincerity in the contacts which the guests have with each other, that he cannot feel there is much to be commended in American manners and social habits.

Steiner thinks that the essence of the American philosophy may be stated in the words which he early heard here: "Young man, in this country you must remember that God helps them who help themselves". 8 America is the land of opportunity, but this opportunity will come only to the person who is ready to seize every chance that offers itself. "Be prepared for anything" is a typical creed, and it symbolizes one of the strongest of our national customs -- that of making the fullest use of our boundless opportunities.

6. Antin, p. 279
7. Lewisohn, p. 169
8. Steiner, p. 52
There are certain great figures in American life which are not only profoundly venerated by native-born Americans, but which have a strong appeal to the immigrant. Many years before he came to our shores, Michael Pupin had learned of the lives and deeds of Franklin, Lincoln, and other notable Americans; and to his interest in these men he attributes the kindling of his desire to come to America. His admiration for the great men of the Republic was ever a potent factor in his Americanization. At the time when he was about to enter Columbia College, the alma mater of Hamilton, Jay and Livingstone, Pupin was tremendously impressed by the generosity of a land where a poor Serbian immigrant might take his place in a school along with some of the sons of founders of the nation. At the very beginning of his American residence, Pupin was told by a humble fireman, "This country, my lad, is a monument to the lives of men of brains and character and action who made it". From this day forth, the name "United States of America" recalled to Pupin's mind, Washington, Hamilton, Franklin, Lincoln and other great men who are regarded as the fathers of this country; and when he learned to know and to appreciate them, he felt that he was well qualified to consider himself a part of the country.

Abraham Lincoln represents a particular type of American idealism. When Rihbany first learned the story of Lincoln, it seemed to open a vein of sympathy in his nature that awakened a deep reverence for the democracy which "this great and various men so nobly vindicated".

9. Pupin, p. 193
Similarly, George Washington occupies a high place among American traditions, and the immigrant is quick to grasp the significance of this veneration. The precocious Mary Antin felt herself a different being when her teachers had told her the story of Washington. "Undoubtedly", she writes of the experience, "I was a fellow citizen and George Washington was another. It thrilled me to realize what sudden greatness had fallen on me, and at the same time it sobered me, as with a sense of responsibility. What more could America give a child?" 10

It is the almost unanimous verdict of foreign observers that one of the greatest American traditions is the torso motto, "Play the Game". In these words, one writer believes, are summed up one aspect of the history of this country with all of its traditions. Pupin writes of it, "No foreigner can understand this country who does not know the full meaning of this phrase which I first heard from a youngster at Columbia. No foreign language can so translate the idea as to reproduce its brevity and at the same time convey its full meaning. To 'play the game' according to the best traditions of the land which offered me all of its opportunities was always my idea of Americanization." 11

The immigrant who has become thoroughly acquainted with his new land is in a position to acquire a peculiar veneration for its ideals and traditions. And the naturalized immigrant is never happier than when he returns to his native land, after a long period of residence in America, there to sing the praises of his adopted land. The immigrant who thus revisits his native country is able to remove prejudices toward America in a way in which the native-born American cannot do. Statements which, coming from a native American might sound as boasts

10. Antin, p. 224
11. Pupin, p. 115
and bragging, have an entirely different meaning when made by a naturalized citizen. This opportunity to "put in a good word" for America, abroad, is one that is eagerly seized by every immigrant whose naturalization really means that he has come to know America's traditions, and has embraced her precepts with sincere enthusiasm.

American business life is full of traditions; and the American's determination to "play the game" results in a universal observance of these traditions. Bok, in his editorial work, early learned that there were certain matters connected with his office that he must not speak of outside that office. To do so would have been to violate one of the most cherished traditions of his business circle, and would have meant complete ostracism. Riis, the reporter, also learned that his craft was governed by a set of traditions that were none the less inviolable because they were unwritten. It is this quality of fair play and sincerity that Panunzio terms the "practical idealism" of the American people.

Perhaps one of the finest traditions that has been recorded by immigrants is the tradition demanding that criticism of American institutions and practices must be constructive, and not entirely destructive if it is to be at all heedworthy. America has as a super-ideal, the ideal of progress, and this is a thing which demands that any suggested change must be for the better; and he who would offer any suggestion of change in the existing order must bring forth his constructive policy with which to supplant that which is to be abolished, if he would obtain a hearing.

An ideal firmly entrenched in the American mind is that the criterion by which to judge an act is not "is it customary?", but rather,
"is it right!". Decadent nations, all through the history of the world, have offered evidence in proof of the fact that subservience to rigid custom alone is a source of corruption and evil. And the consensus of opinion seems to be that America is remarkably free from this hazard. The American is left, in all of his acts, very much to his own judgment, and his first consideration is usually not custom so much as whether a thing is right, and convenient, and advantageous. This is a mark of a virile, a rugged, and a progressive nation, and Andrew Carnegie finds in it one of the hopeful factors in the outlook for America's future. 12

There is one tradition that Dr. Steiner does not find in America that he would greatly like to see established and perpetuated. This is a tradition of citizenship. This acute observer of American tendencies feels that the right of citizenship has been too freely given, in the case of the native-born. Because it has been his experience that the immigrant who has had to work for the right of citizenship prizes it much more highly than does the native-born, who holds it lightly because it came easily, Dr. Steiner feels that "the time must come when home-born and stranger alike shall learn to realize that it is not only a gift but a privilege which must be earned, and whose right to hold must be proved by him who holds it. He must learn that there is a Spirit of America which broods, with a noble idealism, over the land." 13

12. Carnegie, p. 61
13. Steiner, p. 249
(14 omitted through error in numbering)
- Democracy and Snobbishness -

Perhaps the finest evidence of the reality of American democracy is to be found in the frequency with which immigrant writers comment on the fact that in America a man is judged by his true worth, not by and circumstances of family, race, or occupation. The familiar phrase, "A man's a man for a' that" has nowhere a truer meaning than it does in American life. Even after a number of early trials that nearly destroyed his faith in the existence of this doctrine in America, Panunzio, in later years, was led to the conclusion that "if a foreigner really tries to make good, recognition will come. I realized that with the better and larger class of Americans, a man's true worth is all that really counts." 15 It is certain, from the narratives of these immigrants themselves, that with America's best people foreign birth makes little or no difference. As Panunzio states the situation, "Americans place a value here on a man's own worth and character, be he a descendent of the humblest peasant or of the highest lord". 16

Even in the larger colleges, where the youth of the wealthiest families are gathered, Pupin finds that this doctrine of true worth is the only one that is believed in by the students. To be sure, a man who can come to college with a fine American name -- a name with the traditions of the nation back of it -- has something of an advantage over his fellows, at the outset. But his name is only a letter of recommendation. He himself is always tried, and if he is

15. Panunzio, p. 174
16. Ibid., p. 175

96.
found wanting in his make-up and in his conduct, when weighed by college traditions, he has a lonely time during his college career, in spite of his illustrious name.

Growing out of this shifting of attention from the family -- which occupies the chief place in Europe -- to the individual, is the matter of the respectability of all occupations, another product of American democracy. In this country it matters little, in regard to a man's social standing, what his occupation be, so long as it be an honest one. Edward Bok had not long been started on his Americanization career before he realized that in America a gentleman might do anything, so long as it was an honest and useful occupation, and still retain his social status. And Jacob Riis says, relative to this same point, "A chief reason why I liked this country from the very beginning was that it made no difference what a man was doing, so long as it was some decent work." 17 It is equally true that American school and college life is founded on broad principles of social equality. Rihbany had been brought up, in his native Syria, to feel that manual labor was a disgrace. But here in America he earned his way through college; he worked as janitor, tailor, woodsman, night watchman, mail clerk -- and respectable people thought none the less of him for so doing.

Because of the democratic organization of her social system, America offers an equality of opportunity to all that is not paralleled in any other nation of the world. Rihbany was told in Syria that in America money could be picked up everywhere. That, he found, was not true. "But I found", he adds,"that infinitely better things than money -- knowledge, order, cleanliness, freedom, self reliance, sovereign human rights, self-government and all that these great accomplish-

17. Riis, p. 184
ments imply -- can be picked up everywhere in America by whoever earnestly seeks them." 18 And this is representative of many utterances on the subject.

Lewisohn alone, of the writers in this field, failed to find what might fairly be called equality of opportunity. He attributes his failure to his being a Jew. He, like other immigrants, had come to America believing the assertions that equality of opportunity was implicit in the very spiritual foundation of the Republic; but unlike the others, he had failed to find the assertion vindicated. Facts, however, seem to suggest that the difficulty may be with the individual, in this case, rather than with social conditions. The work of Stein and Miss Antin, both Jews, is incontestable proof that they were able to find their place and their Great Opportunity in American life.

Lewisohn is always a little too much the rebel to be trusted implicitly in all of his statements. Nevertheless, his observations are valuable, in that they are presented fearlessly and unequivocally.

The feeling of kindly fellowship, of neighborliness, and of mutual consideration that is so beautiful a part of a true Democracy, made its appeal, however, even to the implacable Lewisohn. In their little South Carolinian village, the immigrant family did not want for constant and sympathetic attention from their American neighbors; and this spirit of friendliness made a strong impression on the mind of the young German-Jew. A passage quoted previously in this paper, in the chapter on Village Life, will bear repetition at this point. Says Lewisohn, "I know that in the early nineties there lingered in that village -- as there did doubtless in many places -- something of that

18. Richbany, pp. 277-78
honest simplicity, that true democratic kindness which we like to associate with the years of the primitive Republic." 19

The great and notable people of America are characteristically democratic and un-aristocratic in their attitude. Edward Bok found it the usual rule that the more notable a great man was, the more gracious and approachable was he. Among the very kindest in their treatment of the young immigrant, were President and Mrs. Hayes. Pupin had been accustomed to the pomp and artificial display of state occasions in Austria, and when he first witnessed a similar function in America, he felt his admiration for the democratic simplicity of the highest officials in the United States, grew appreciably. He realized then as never before that America is a monument to the lives of the men "of brains and character and action"; not to kings and princes and their armies, as is so often the case in the countries of Europe.

Mary Antin writes, out of her own experience as a resident of the slums who yet moved with the best families of Boston, "Outside America I should hardly be believed if I told how simply Dover Street merged into the Back Bay. These are matters to which I long to testify." 20

Perhaps no instance could be cited which would more clearly illustrate the fundamental democracy of America, from its highest officials on down, than that told by Jacob Riis of President Grant. During a fire on Fifth Avenue, the President stepped within the fire lines. A policeman who blocked the way seized him by the collar, not recognizing him as the President of the United States, swung him about, and, hitting him a resounding whack across the back with his club, told him to stay outside of the fire lines. The President said never a word, realizing that he was in the wrong, and from that day on Riis had a new insight into the greatness of the American people.

19. Lewinohn, p. 54
Much has been said on both sides of the conflict over whether American life is characterized chiefly by "base commercialism" and "gross materialism", or by idealism and a love of the higher interests of life. In a nation containing not only the greatest wealth, but the greatest per capita wealth of any country of the world, it is inevitable that a great deal of time, energy, and interest should be devoted to the conduct of business and commercial affairs. But the statement sometimes made that America is interested only in the "almighty dollar" is not a just one. It arouses the resentment of both native-born and naturalized citizens.

Nothing so completely surprises the foreigner as the discovery of the trait of "wonderful idealism" that he finds in American character, according to the statement of one of our foreign-born commentators. The impression is current in European countries that America worships money only; and in answer to this Bok exclaims vehemently, "I can say from personal knowledge, that the Dutch worship the gulden infinitely more than do the Americans the dollar." Often the American is not conscious of this idealism himself, but it is very close to the surface, and, as Sir James Bryce has so well said, the only approach to the American character is through its idealism. It is this quality which gives the truest inspiration to the foreign-born in his endeavor to serve the people of his adopted country. Bok, speaking from a large experience, says that in no other country of the world is the moral conception so clear and true as in America, and no people will give a larger and more permanent reward to the man

21. Bok, p. 449
whose effort for the public has its roots in honor and truth.

However, in spite of the fundamental reality of American idealism in the larger issues of life, there are many ways in which this country still falls short of the goal that should be hers. It cannot be denied that America lacks that deep regard for beauty which is the crowning attribute of any nation. The very appearance of most of our large cities has, until recently, been a strong point in the argument that American interests are almost exclusively materialistic. The "network of railroad tracks, the long rows of dingy and unattractive business houses, the labyrinth of business streets" that Dr. Steiner describes is a characteristic that points to a very feeble sense of beauty in the American mind. Recently a Royal Commission from Germany, visiting this country, confessed to their American guide that they believed us to be the most materialistic people in the world. When they first landed in New York they faced, all through a sleepless night, three huge electric signs, opposite their hotel. One was of a woman's face, advertising some article of feminine toilet; another of a whiskey bottle (this occurred in 1912), and a third of a chariot race. These three signs seemed to the visitors to symbolize the American spirit. The woman who seems to rule everything, the whiskey which represents the love of pleasure, and the horses, the rush of trampling trade. In this same spirit, Mary Antin writes that for days after her arrival in America, she could see nothing but the material splendors of the city. Such are the first impressions of the newcomers to the United States.

Riis finds a common evidence of the American materialistic

22. Steiner, p. 161
tendency in the feeling of the average citizen that he can accomplish good for his needy fellowmen by merely giving money. Of course such donations are a help, but Riis feels that America would be a far more beautiful place, and a happier land, if her people would give more of themselves, in work of this kind, and less of their money. Bok mentions this same weakness. To merely sign a check is no evidence, in a rich man, that he is moved by any idealism which seeks really to lessen the burdens of others.

It cannot be denied that money matters have been allowed to outweigh other more important concerns many times in the history of our business and political life. For many years it was permitted, by the administration of a large city, that the health of its residents be jeopardized by an impure water supply, merely because the necessary change would involve a large financial outlay. Seemingly, human life was held cheaper than gold. But this is not representative of the true American idealism that today spares no expense in matters of safeguarding the lives and the health of the American people.

Many observers see evidences of materialism in certain American school tendencies. When Lewisohn notes that in a typical American college, by far the most handsome buildings and by far the largest classes are to be found in the scientific, industrial and professional departments, he is voicing a protest against America’s interest in things, rather than in ideas. "Our people do not believe in education at all", he adds, "college is to fit you to do things – build bridges, cure diseases, teach French. It is not supposed to help you to be." 23

Panunzio, however, finds an answer to this charge. He admits

23. Lewisohn, p. 162
that America is practical in her interests, but he has discovered that the practicality is imbued with a deep idealism that sweetens the whole. Lewisohn cannot see that there is room for the refining influence of the humanities even in the most active profession, but Panunzio, with a saner insight does recognize this fact. Lewisohn cries loudly that "a society which, as a whole, venerates Edison more than Emerson is in danger of complete destruction and obliteration."²⁴, but Panunzio is able to see that in the midst of her materialism, America is distinctly idealistic. He calls our most characteristic national trait, a "practical idealism". America is practical enough to have a wholesome, a zestful, and a growth-promoting interest in the material phases of life; but this does not imply that she is not idealistic enough to have an appreciation, also, of the finer things of life. Walter Damrosch ²⁵ found that the American public is just as appreciative, once it is given a fair chance, of good music as is the Continental nation; the avalanche of protests that came to the commissioners who were about to destroy part of the beauty of Niagara Falls in order to obtain more power, shows that we will not sacrifice beauty to commercialism. Who can say that back of our materialism there is not a tremendous idealism?

²⁴. Lewisohn, p. 173
²⁵. Damrosch, p. 147
Race prejudice, in one form or another, is a phenomenon which exists in every country on the globe. In America it is particularly heightened in its intensity because of the presence of the negro; and here, too, we have a more or less prevalent antipathy toward the Jew. When the average American speaks of "race prejudice" he refers, usually, to one of these two problems. In discussing this phase of American life, the field will be limited chiefly to the anti-Semitic prejudice, inasmuch as the negro problem does not enter into the present discussion to any great degree.

There are, however, certain minor manifestations of this general subject that are worthy of note. Panunzio is not only an Italian, but a South Italian -- a member of the race which goes in America under the appellation "Dago". As a result, he felt, especially during his early days in this country, a certain amount of hostility. In his college days a few students felt no hesitation in honoring him with a "dago" not and then, but this, he says, was not at all general.

That there is a distinct antipathy toward the Italians in some sections of the country, is shown by the fact that at one time Panunzio was unable to find a decent dwelling for an Italian Vice-Consul, in the city of Portland, Maine. For some reason, none of the owners of houses in a desirable portion of the city would rent them to the Italian official, and it finally developed that the reason was that "the neighbors would object to having an 'Eyetalian' living next door to them".26

This attitude offers a grave stumbling block to assimilation.

26. Panunzio, p. 206
Jacob Riis, because of his German appearance (though he is a Dane) was often alluded to sneeringly as the "Dutchman" and certain classes of people seemed to take delight in showing their dislike of this type of "foreigner". Edward Bok suffered a few similar indignities. But it is notable that Rihbany, though a Syrian and therefore a distinctly alien type, remembers but a very few occasions on which he was unkindly made aware of his foreign blood. They are so rare, he writes, that they are hardly worth mentioning.

It is the Jew who feels his racial peculiarities most distinctly. Yet even in the case of these people, the record of the majority of Jewish writers is that they have been freely accepted by the American people. Of a number of Jewish autobiographers, Lewisohn is practically the only one to record any violent anti-Semitic feeling in America. He tells of some of his own experiences with this antipathy; and by so doing makes it clear that there is a certain amount of prejudice against the Jew — a prejudice that hinders his advancement and retards his assimilation. When he was about to finish his undergraduate work and sought an appointment to a Fellowship, he met with failure and disappointment, simply — he felt — because of his Jewish blood. An application, later, for an academic position in a Middle Western college was refused with the frank acknowledgement that the Board would tolerate no Jews on the instructional staff. So, all through his early manhood, Lewisohn felt that he was excluded from many things that he really deserved; excluded in such subtle ways that the annoyance was all the more disspiriting because so intangible. He was naturally of a morbid, sensitive, and introspective temperament, and the hindrances placed in his way resulted in a feeling of rebelliousness and
antipathy toward all things American that later restitutions could not quite fully overcome.

America has yet much to learn in the matter of toleration, brotherhood and true democracy. But the outlook for the future is hopeful to Pupin, who writes, "Ideal democracy, if attainable at all, will certainly be attainable in our country, whose traditions are gradually eliminating race hatreds and suspicions, and making these unknown human passions on this blessed continent". 27

27. Pupin, p. 287
CHAPTER FOUR

American School and Church Tendencies
The importance of the public school system in the process of assimilating the immigrant cannot, according to many authorities, be overestimated. In enumerating the forces that are most potent in bringing about an adaptation of the immigrant to his surroundings, Jacob Riis places the public school at the very head. He would have the public school, in its ultimate development, the neighborhood center of activities; he would have it the first care of the city government, at whatever expense. This writer feels that only in this way can the schools be made the "real cornerstones of our liberties". Steiner speaks of the public school as "the institution which dots the land and grinds all the grain into the same grist"; he too sees in it a great factor in the assimilation of the immigrant alien.

Other commentators have been quick to see the greatness of America's public school system. Free from faults it is not, but it is ever moving in the right direction, and each passing year sees a marked improvement in the efficiency not only of the administrative, but of the teaching force as well. Ribbeny found the public school system a revelation of the American spirit. Often he used to go -- and the passion still remains with him -- and stand opposite a public school at the time of dismissal, just for the purpose of seeing "the pupils pour out, so clean and orderly and seemingly animated by all that is noblest in the life of this great nation. My

1. Steiner, p. 73

107.
soul would revel in the thought that no distinctions were made in those temples of learning between Jews and Gentiles, Protestant and Catholic; all enjoyed the equality of privilege, shared the intellectual and moral feast, drank deeply the spirit of noblest patriotism."  

Similarly, Mary Antin thought the public school, with which she became acquainted soon after her arrival in America, a representation of the best in American democracy. When a little child in the street took her by the hand and asked her to come to school with her, Mary Antin realized that education was free in the United States -- even a little child could offer it to the newcomer. "The public school", writes Miss Antin, "has done its greatest service to the country when it has made us foreigners into good Americans." and in this sentence she has suggested one of the greatest, perhaps the greatest, mission of the city public schools.

Edward Bok has some telling indictments against the management of our school system, however. In his early years in America, he felt that the much-vaunted public school system which the United States had borrowed from his own Holland was not up to the standard of the foreign system, either because of a sheer disregard for the thoroughness "that makes the Dutch public schools the admiration of the world"  

or by too close a regard for politics. Later Bok adds that he is willing to believe the public school may have increased its efficiency in recent years. But he still feels that it is indeed a question for the American to ponder, just how far the system is efficient for the education of a child who comes to its schools without a knowledge of the first word of the English language. Bok, too, feels the immense

2. Rihbany, p. 280
3. Antin, p. 222
4. Bok, p. 439
importance of the school system in our national development, for
he observes, "what happens in America, in the years to come depends,
in large measure, on what is happening today in the schools of the
country". 5

Numerous critics agree in acknowledging the superiority of
the American teacher to the teacher of European countries. Panunzio
found a good example of this in the difference which he noted between
the inspirational methods the American teachers used, in contrast to
the coercion of the Italian instructors, and the difference in results.
It was this young man's experience that the pupil receives much more
sympathetic and intelligent attention than is usually accorded him
in Continental countries.

The determination of the immigrant to avail himself of the
benefits of the public schools often exceeds that of the native-born
youth. The foreigner sees in the system a wonderful opportunity,
freely and generously bestowed; the native-born American more often
regards school attendance as duty rather than a privilege, simply
because he is so accustomed to its existence that he cannot obtain
a true perspective of its value. A conversation with a poor Russian
Jew, which Mary Antin had recorded, shows how deep-seated is this ven-
eration, in the mind of the foreigner, for America's public schools.
This immigrant was heard to say to his daughter, "Only show yourself
worthy, Goldie, and I'll keep you in school till you get to something.
In America everybody can get to something if he only wants to. I
would even send you farther than high school -- to be a teacher maybe.
Why not? In America where schools are free, everything is possible." 6

5. Bok, p. 440
6. Antin, p. 352
In the face of such an attitude as this, the enormous responsibility of the school to the immigrant and his children becomes apparent.

The chief menace that Dr. Steiner sees in our school system, is that of the worthless teacher, he who takes up teaching merely to support himself and to keep his hands white. These people are trespassers on a noble profession; they contribute nothing to the pupil's development, they are utterly useless in the great cause of the American school. Fortunately, this type of teacher is becoming more and more rare. Steiner and Mary Antin agree with Rihbany and Panunzio in the statement that American school teachers are, on the whole, "true teachers". They are teachers who realize the responsibility of their calling, and are doing their best, especially in the case of the city slum schools, to measure up to the opportunities placed before them.

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The experience of the writers who are being considered in the present work, has covered all types of American colleges -- large and small, denominational and non-sectarian, Eastern and Western, as well as Middle Western. There is to be found a surprising unanimity of opinion with regard to one particular point -- the democratic qualities of all types of American colleges.

Michael Pupin entered Columbia College, at the beginning of his University career, and his experiences there were sufficient to convince him for all time that there is no basis for the charge made from time to time, that some of the old American colleges encourage snobbery and a spirit of aristocracy that is not in harmony with American ideals of democracy. Here, in a college where there were many men from the oldest and finest families in America, the young immigrant found that he was able to take his place among the rest in all of the student activities -- even to become a leader. "When American college boys", writes Pupin, "have among themselves a Hamilton, a \textit{E}witt and several descendents of Jay, and yet elect for class president the penniless son of a Serbian peasant village because they admire his mental and physical efforts to learn and to comply with Columbia's traditions, one can rest assured that the spirit of American democracy was very much alive in these college boys." 7

Steiner's experience in a Middle Western college led him to the same conclusion. The Hindu, Mukerji, found, in a college located in a Pacific Coast state, a spirit of fellowship and goodwill so

7. Pupin, p. 121
strong as to break down all the barriers he had feared might exist between himself and his Occidental associates. The fact that he was poor, spoke English none too well, and had to resort to many almost menial tasks to pay his way through college, did not prevent the Italian lad, Panunzio, from entering into every phase of his college life on an equal footing with his American brothers. And Mary Antin found, to her intense surprise, that when she went to a Boston young ladies' boarding school she was received cordially by her schoolmates. Aristocrats they were, but they did not hold themselves aloof from the Jewish girl; they rated her by her scholarship, not by her father's occupation.

There is, to the immigrant who is approaching an American college, an atmosphere of friendliness and helpfulness that is conspicuously worthy of note. Especially is this attitude a welcome one to the newcomer, because in most cases he has had a hard struggle to arrive at a sufficiently advanced stage, in his American education, to enter a college, and he is filled with hopes and forebodings as to just what he is going to find in the new environment. When Panunzio, after the years of buffeting already described in a previous chapter, received a hearty and a gracious greeting from the president of a Maine Wesleyan college, he felt that a new era in his American life had opened; an era that was to be marked by sympathetic and helpful friendliness -- and such proved to be the case. Steiner, too, was poor and homeless when he first entered the portals of a college; but his eagerness for fellowship and his hunger for friends was soon satisfied in the beautiful atmosphere in which he found himself. Other instances might be mentioned, all of which indicate the true
spirit of fellowship and kinship that exists among the young people of the nation, whatever be their origin, nationality or position.

One of the most interesting phases of American college life is the athletic interest. Many controversies have been waged over the question of the real value of the attention given to sports and games in our colleges; and the opinion of immigrant commentators is likewise divided. Pupin thinks that athletics have an inestimable value in college life, and should not be discouraged. In his own experience, he found that he became much more fully a member of his class after he had won an athletic victory for it, than when he had merely distinguished himself in some of his studies. His scholastic victory in Greek and mathematics meant nothing to his classmates, because it was a purely personal matter; but his athletic victory meant everything because it was a victory for the whole class. *Esprit de corps*, he feels, is one of the splendid things which college life cultivates; and it is cultivated chiefly through the medium of athletic interests which bind the entire student body together in a common aim. Lewisohn, on the other hand, has little but condemnation for the enthusiasm of college students over a football fame. He regards it as a manifestation of the unintellectual nature of their interests, and sees in it only a meaningless display. Lewisohn fails to look beneath this "display" at the motives of school loyalty that are the underlying forces in all forms of college enthusiasm.

"Play the game" is one of the traditions that all true college students observe; and it is a principle that carries over into every phase of American life with most desirable results, as has been previously mentioned. Pupin was told early in his college career, by a fellow
student, that it did not matter what his nationality was, nor what his former limitations had been. "You will be a good fellow", said his adviser, "if you will learn to play the game". The words sank deep in the mind of the young Serbian, and have always helped him in his efforts to accustom himself to American ways of thinking.

There are many elements of idealism to be found in a college town that are a direct result of the effort to live up to American college ideals. Steiner finds that the typical college community is one in which the finest aspects of American life are to be found. A college becomes the center of education, of musical culture, of art, of all the higher interests of life. In such an atmosphere as this the evils of fanaticism, narrow-mindedness and hypocrisy, while they may be present, never dominate as they do in places where college idealism is lacking.

Lewisohn, speaking from a varied experience with college young people, finds one grave weakness in his students. They seem to do little real thinking; they are happy and bright, but only because they refuse to face the sterner realities of life. They will not concern themselves with matters very far beyond their present daily life. There is this interesting passage in Lewisohn's book: "I look about me", he writes, "and watch for one face that betrays a troubled soul, a yearning of the mind, the touch of any flame. There is none. Thought and emotion seem not to be included in the birthright of the American youth". Combined with this, is the charge that the interests of the college youth are entirely utilitarian. Students come to the universities not to find truth but to become engineers, or farmers, or doctors and teachers. They do not want to become different men and.

8. Pupin, p. 115
9. Lewisohn, p. 155
women. Such is the conclusion of Lewisohn.

From his knowledge of European colleges obtained through study abroad after his graduation from an American college, Pupin makes some interesting comparisons between the two. A chief difference in American and European college study, is that in Europe the students are likely to be much more migratory than they are in America. The student goes wherever he hears of a professor with whom he especially wants to study; a situation that is not found to any great extent in American practice. English schools, he finds, differ from ours in their division of the day -- the morning hours for mental work, and the afternoon for physical training. Such a plan, it is the writer's belief, would increase the efficiency of the American institutions, if wisely adapted to our present system.
**Religious and Church Life**

In most American institutions and practices, there exists a far greater degree of freedom than is to be found in other countries. This, naturally, holds true in the religious life of America. Freedom of thought in all matters of faith and belief is one of the most characteristic of American traits, and it results not only in a great diversity and dissemination of religious creeds, but also in a degree of freedom within each form of church life that is strange to the foreigner.

The American citizen, because he is so accustomed to freedom and progressiveness in all of the other phases of his activity, carries this same feeling into his church life. The Syrian, Rihbany, who was deeply interested in the religious tendencies of American life, noticed this quality early in his studies, and he came to adopt it for himself. "I felt", he writes, "that as an American citizen my religion must be as free, as progressive, and as hopeful as the genius of my adopted country" 10. The American does not, as a rule, turn to dusty and musty theological documents to find his faith and his God. He does not feel that the Council of Nicaea, or any other council, had any right to make an authoritative and infallible creed for succeeding generations. Simplicity, directness, and open-mindedness are, then, the outstanding characteristics of America's religious thought.

One writer mentions that the ever-present sight of churchspires rising above the houses and trees of the American town and city, as

10. Rihbany, p. 338

116.
witnesses to man's desire for God, always gave him great inward delight; even though there is missing, in the religion of the American, some of the mysticism that lends a certain charm to the practices of some European and Oriental countries. American religion is closely connected with the reality of everyday life — there is present a degree of practicality, a closeness to the vital issues of life, that is characteristic of a young and active nation. The American thinks of life in terms of service; religious zeal to him means consecration to some definite aim, not merely a devotion to certain church forms, rituals, and practices of a more or less formal nature. In speaking of one of the greatest and most representative American ministers of the Gospel, Henry Ward Beecher, Pupin observes that "the sermons were always free from involved theological analysis; they dealt with simple questions of human life and its determination by human habits." 11

Many immigrants, however, feel a distinct loss when they realize that in American churches they are not going to find the ceremonious, ritualistic form of worship to which they have been accustomed in their native land. To the mind of the European, this background of ceremony is a very necessary adjunct to church worship. As Dr. Steiner writes, "The American service lacks all the setting which the foreigner connects with public worship, and I feel reasonably certain that because the appeal of the Evangelical church lacks the ritualistic background, there are comparatively few immigrants affected by it unless they have come to this country with similar traditions." 12

One newcomer to America, whose nature was exceedingly devout, could

11. Pupin, p. 106
12. Steiner, p. 195
find little that appealed to him in the first church service he attended in New York City. The room was rather uneclesiastical, the people were not reverent, and the organ music was too secular for his taste. He did not like the hymns; when the quartet sang an anthem he felt that he must be in a concert hall rather than in a church. As he recalled the somber organ music, the dim light, the incense, the magnificence, and the mystery of the worship in his home land, he felt that here was one respect in which America fell short for him.

Pupin, just arrived from his native Idvor, was disappointed with the first American service that he witnessed, also. He writes of the disappointment, "Delaware City was much bigger than my native Idvor, and yet the religious service at Idvor was much more elaborate. There was here no choral singing, and there were no ceremonies with a lot of burning candles and the sweet perfume of burning incense; and there was no ringing of harmonious church bells. It was much less attractive, so much so that I wondered how I could ever drop my Sorbian ways for these." 13

One of the most characteristically American customs is to be found in the species of religious activity known as the "revival meeting". Nothing comparable to it exists, it seems, in Europe, and the result is that the immigrant finds much at which to be surprised, when he comes in contact with this type of religion for the first time. It is noticeable, also, that those writers have little to say about the revival that is not unfavorable. One observer, while he was impressed by the zeal with which these Christians labored to bring "sinners" to Christ, and by the fact that during the revival the

13. Pupin, p. 52
religious feeling loomed highest in the community, developed a strong feeling of aversion for the message of the Evangelists, which, to put it in the writer's own words, "contained infinitely more fear of hell-fire than love for the Christ-life, and to whom the clearest evidence of the religious interest in a community was the size of the collection." 14 Lewisohn's attitude toward the revival is similar to this. He tells of a time when a professor in the University in which Lewisohn also taught, was publicly converted by Billy Sunday. Says Lewisohn, "The fact that he was not thereupon privately 'fired', that he was still thought capable of teaching his science, symbolized the situation in its naked horror." 15

One grave fault in the social work of the church is frequently indicated. In almost all of the larger centers of population, there is a crying need for work to be done among the immigrant elements. But all too often the churches of the city will raise hundreds and thousands of dollars to send missionaries to foreign lands; while right in their own midst, decent people are being brutalized, left to live in darkness, and all of their innate religious ideals are crushed by overwork, underpay, wretched housing conditions. "Charity begins at home", is a precept American religious workers have not always put into practice. Panunzio had one experience which clearly indicates this weakness. In a suburb of Boston, there was once a church located in a downtown section in which lived some twenty-five thousand Italians. These Italians had so invaded the community that the American constituency of the church had almost faded out -- and there was left not a single religious or social organization ministering

14. Rihbany, p. 113
15. Lewisohn, p. 161
to the needs of the Italians. But when it was suggested to the remaining American members that a man be appointed to the church who could serve them and at the same time do something for the Italians of the neighborhood, they would not listen to the plan. They would not suffer "their church or any part of it to be turned into an Italian church". The incident points the way to a greater tolerance and broad-mindedness on the part of the American church.

It cannot be denied that the church does have a conspicuous place in the work of Americanizing the immigrant; its responsibility is a great one. Riis ranks its influence second only to that of the public school, and it has been Dr. Steiner's experience that the immigrant may be reached and touched through the spiritual medium when all other methods would fail. America needs more of religion in its truest sense -- the religion that makes the affairs of the needy and less enlightened and favored, the immediate concern of the more fortunate. A definite progress in this direction has already been recorded, and many writers feel that the time is coming when the American church will fully live up to its opportunities, in this most important field.

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- CHAPTER FIVE -

Becoming An American
The problem of assimilation is far too broad and deep a subject to permit of any extended treatment in this paper. Moreover, it is, to a greater degree than other topics considered herein, strictly a sociological and ethnological problem; it is a matter which does not invite literary so much as scientific and technical treatment.

However, this investigation would be incomplete if the comments found upon the subjects of assimilation and naturalization of the immigrant were omitted; and it is of interest to note the opinions advanced as to what are the most potent forces making for assimilation in this country. An enumeration of these forces indicates that there are many of them; some work, to a large degree, automatically, others must be encouraged, still others are yet to be developed.

Some of the environmental factors which may be mentioned are as follows: There are few, if any, geographic and climatic "pockets" in which a type may survive unmodified. Climate, Dr. Steiner asserts, must be considered. Practically the whole of this continent is under the dominance of the same erratic weather changes -- the climatic influences will work upon Slav, Latin and Semite precisely as they work upon Celt, German and Anglo-Saxon. The geographic forces which do so much to change racial types operate almost universally. The only serious check upon this elemental power to assimilate our mixture
of human material is the overcrowding which is found in the city tenements. No small factor in the assimilating process, according to one writer, is the food, which is so little provincialized that San Francisco and New York eat the same breakfast food and bake their bread with the same brand of flour. The economic opportunity which permits men to rise to a higher standard -- the American standard of living, -- is a potent factor. The immigrant finds here perhaps his first opportunity to obtain a margin or surplus; new needs are created and a fresh stimulus is introduced into the life of the stranger. Whatever tends to diminish this economic opportunity hinders Americanization. The public school plays an important part, in assimilating the immigrant and his children; the church, as has previously been stated, has a large opportunity in the socializing of the community life; and above all institutions and ideals, is the great Spirit of Democracy, perhaps the greatest of all assimilative forces. Democracy is nothing more nor less than a sense of confidence in our fellowmen. As soon as it is developed to this stage, it has a power to bring the foreign-born into sympathy and understanding with the native born that is unsurpassed by any other force.

One of the great stumbling blocks in the way of assimilation, is found in the segregation of immigrants. "Little Italys", "Little Polands", "Little Ghettos" and other such districts found in our larger cities are examples of the failure to assimilate the foreigner -- a failure that results, at least in some measure, from a disinclination on the part of Americans to take the stranger into their midst. As long as these cities within cities exist, apart from the main body of Americans society, there will be barriers to assimilation which no efforts
can batter down. Some of the factors in the situation are inherent in human nature, others could be eliminated by a proper adjustment in our educational system and by means of a proper distribution of the immigrant population. There are also problems of a more individual nature that arise when the immigrant comes to this country after having reached an age of mental maturity, at a time when it is practically impossible for him to change his mental outlook. He has passed the age when a man absorbs new ideas and forms new habits; how far such a man can be truly Americanized is a serious question.

The same inherent difficulty of inadaptibility to American life is also present in the educated men and women who come to us from non-English-speaking countries. Illiterates are far more pliable and susceptible to American influences than educated persons. Young immigrants who spend the years of their unfolding in an immigrant community in America are liable, in later years, to this same danger. They will not be able to adequately adapt themselves to the new order.

Michael Pupin gives, in his autobiography, a most suggestive example of one of the assimilating forces that has received little attention from commentators at large. "I firmly believe", says this immigrant, "that the amalgamation of the foreign-born would be speeded up wonderfully if we could make it obligatory that every foreign-born American should revisit his native land at stated intervals of time." 1 Such a visit as this, Pupin found from his own experience, stirs up a new veneration and appreciation for American ideals and traditions, in the mind of the immigrant, and enables him to feel himself a part of American life to a degree that would not otherwise be possible. This is a common reaction to the immigrant who is revisiting his native

1. Pupin, p. 318
land, as is attested by the fact that Riis, Panunzio, Steiner, Bok, and many other writers have undergone the same feeling.

Perhaps the greatest force working for the cause of assimilation, however, is personal influence. Rihbany feels that the largest influence toward the solution of the "immigration problem" is the work of those Americans -- not necessarily those who are writing books on good citizenship -- who stand before the foreigner as the embodiment of the great American ideals of freedom, self-reliance, order, knowledge, and self-government. After all, as Riis observes, there is nothing which can take the place of human contact in developing a spirit of good will and understanding. It is here that every American citizen can play his part in the great task of assimilating the stranger.
- Criticism of the Naturalization Process -

The moment when he takes the oath of American citizenship is one of the most important and serious occasions in the immigrant's life. It is lamentable, therefore, that circumstances so often rob the event of much of its beauty and sanctity.

The immigrant often experiences almost insurmountable difficulties in fulfilling the more technical demands of the naturalization laws, which require the presence of witnesses who will swear, under oath, that they have known the immigrant to be a resident of the United States for a period of five continuous years. When the newcomer has lived a more or less wandering life in America, it is a matter of the greatest difficulty to find three persons who have known him continuously during that period of time. Any gaps in the knowledge of one witness must be filled by the affidavit of another, which means that the applicant for citizenship is sometimes forced to bear the expense and inconvenience of having a large number of witnesses present. This may not seem to be a very serious difficulty, in view of the magnitude of the step that is being taken; nevertheless, it is one of the things that so often keep seekers for citizenship from taking out their final papers.

But most serious is the almost unanimous complaint that the oath of citizenship is administered in a half-hearted, perfunctory manner which robs the event of much of its meaning to the immigrant. Pupin had dreamed for years of the day when he would be admitted into full citizenship in this great country, and when the clerk in
the naturalization office handed him his papers, and, in an off-
hand way, called upon him to promise that he would always be loyal
to the Constitution of the United States, Pupin felt a great dis-
appointment. When, for a period of nine years of long-continued
effort he had been striving to prepare himself for citizenship in
the United States, it all seemed so matter-of-fact and unsatisfying.

The tremendous import of the step, to the immigrant, can be
judged by a reading of the words of Rihban, who writes, "My heart
never thrilled with holier emotion than when I assented to the oath
of allegiance. I felt that by that act I had forever broken the
shackles which had bound me and my forefathers to the chariots of
tyrants, and had become a citizen of a country whose chief function
was to make free, enlightened and useful men." 2 Such a spirit of
idealism should be encouraged by every possible means, yet the actual
fact is that so often the procedure is not so conducted as to leave
the immigrant with any encouragement in his sentiment whatever. As
one writer said, in speaking of his taking of the oath, "What seemed
to me should be a sacred rite proved to be an uninspiring performance.
When I held the long-coveted paper in my hand, the inspiring moment
came, but it transpired only in my own soul, with no encouragement
from the man who had led me in the step." 3

2. Rihban, pp. 218-19
3. Steiner, p. 247
It is when the immigrant comes to consider, in general terms, the results of his life in America that his conclusions have special interest for the student of immigrant affairs. And as was pointed out in the opening chapter of this paper, the foreigner does not find, upon balancing his books, that all of his experiences in the new country have resulted in gain. Every newcomer brings with him some contribution to America; often this gift is spurned and is soon lost to the immigrant himself. He finds, along with the benefits of American life, many disadvantages and hampering influences as well. Panunzio is clear in stating a number of distinct losses that came to him with his removal from Italy to America. One of these was a loosening of his respect for law and order; for he found that Americans had far less of this admirable quality than did his Italian countrymen. The strenuous life he was forced to lead in America resulted in an undermining of his health. His attitude toward thoroughness and exactness in work underwent a change for the worse.

For Edward Bok, America has fallen short in many ways. He was disappointed to learn that America is exceedingly wasteful in almost every phase of her activity. This jarred unpleasantly on his inherited traits of Dutch thrift and economy. He, like Panunzio, accuses America of gross laxity in the matter of thoroughness. Here it seems to be the rule that he who can do a piece of work in the quickest time is most efficient -- too little attention is paid to the other virtues of carefulness and exactness. "We all have our pet notions as to the particular evil which is the 'curse of America'," writes.
Bok, "but I always think that Theodore Roosevelt came closest to the real curse when he classed it as a lack of thoroughness." 4

To the American, part and parcel of his country, these particulars in which his country falls short with the immigrant are perhaps not so evident; they may even seem not so important. But they are included in this study simply because they are failings which make a definite and lasting impression on the immigrant, and are, hence, indubitably present in our national life. To the foreign-born they seem distinct lacks; they loom large; they form serious handicaps which in many cases are never surmounted; they are a menace to that Americanization which is one of our most vital needs as a country. If America has fallen short with these representative immigrants, in these respects, it is reasonable to suppose that she had and is falling short in these same respects with thousands of other immigrants.

The thoughtful American sees in these comments, food for much speculation; they indicate an opportunity for improvement in even this "most glorious of nations".

Happily, however, it is not necessary to close this paper on the minor note just sounded. America, despite her numerous failings, has points of merit which far outweigh, to the immigrant, her shortcomings. It could not be otherwise but that a nation that has achieved such noteworthy success in almost every field of human endeavor should be a nation of innumerable virtues. This truth our immigrants have not been slow to observe, and their writings are full of convincing eulogies of America and of her people.

This is the land of equality and of opportunity; in these two

4. Bok, p. 438
qualities it is unparalleled by any nation that exists or has ever existed. Not only is America great in material resources; she is prodigal in bestowing her wealth upon those who seek it. She is unfettered by part traditions, her people are able to live lives that are unconfined by any influences save those conditioned by ideals of right and wrong. She possesses and lives up to a spirit of democracy that values a man upon his own worth and character, and makes it possible for every aspiring individual who is willing to "play the game" to rise to whatever heights he will. America is a land where action counts for more than does idle theory; yet this practicality is not marred by too great a degree of utilitarianism -- rather, as has already been pointed out, the basic element of American life is a practical idealism, a philosophy of life that makes for unprecedented accomplishment. More self-reliance and independence; honesty and optimism; progressiveness and fair play, are cardinal virtues. Here a man's place in life does not count for so much as does his aim in life.

It is when the immigrant recognizes all these benefits he has received from America that he is most anxious to make the path easier for his fellow immigrants. The attitude of Dr. Steiner is a typical and a noble one, when he writes: "I have preached the doctrine of fellowship with a passion, not only because America gave me a chance to achieve certain things, or because it has granted me certain rights and privileges, but because this country ought to be able to keep itself young enough, and virile and vital enough to bestow these blessings upon all who crowd our shores, filling our cities and entering daily into our inner life."  

5. Steiner, p. 249
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