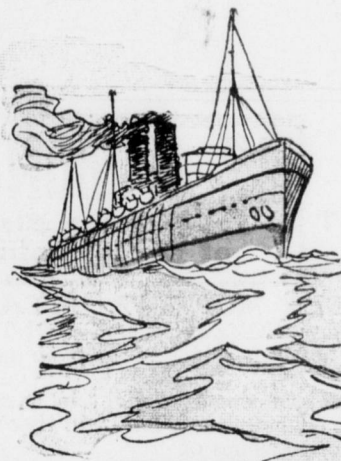


The Cameron County Press.

EMPORIUM, PA., JANUARY 10, 1907.



14



"Men are there with grey beards"

Future Citizens

Absorbed as the average foreigner in America is in hustling around for a living and catching on to the ways of the new land simultaneously, he yet finds time to care for the newly landed immigrant from his native country. And more, he generally manages to find some spare money for the same object.

From the moment an immigrant sets foot on Ellis Island until he is well placed in the new world, he may be guided and protected—as a general rule, free of cost—by a society of his own countrymen, if he so elects.

Thousands of new arrivals unhesitatingly place themselves in the care of the various immigrant societies in the course of a twelve-month; last year one of the one hundred and fifty Italian immigrant organizations in Greater New York looked after about fifty thousand immigrants. The Italian societies are numerous because of the fact that the Italian is a very provincial human being. The men from Naples like to care for arrivals from Naples only. So it is with the men from Venice, and Rome, and Sicily; hence, the large number of Italian societies.

These are the only immigrants among the million odd arriving at the port of New York in a year of whom it may be said that they are not repeatedly victimized before they have cut their eye teeth, before they have learned to their sorrow that, though every man in America is free, it is not logical to conclude, therefore, that every man is honest.

One of the chief objects of all the societies looking after the green immigrant is to protect him from the slysters, swindlers, dishonest hotel and boarding-house runners, and employment agents and other crooks who flock wherever immigrants land, in the hope of securing victims galore for the fattening of their pocketbooks. Far too often they are successful, and so greedy are they that they have frequently set upon and attacked agents of the immigrant societies coming between them and their otherwise easy prey.

In the neighborhood of the Barge Office, New York, where the immigrants passing through Ellis Island land, the harpies are to be found in great numbers. To circumvent them as much as possible the immigrant societies maintain what is known as the escort service.

Most of the immigrant societies keep agents on Ellis Island; only after a society has been rigidly investigated by the government immigration officials is it allowed this concession. Circulating among the immigrants, these agents offer to the newcomers the privilege of

being safely escorted to their respective city destinations or seen safely aboard trains or coastwise steamers. As a general rule the service is free; in a few cases the cost is nominal, just sufficient to cover necessary expenses, such as street car fare.

The agents of each society work among the newcomers of its own nationality, of course. So it comes about that Italians, Jews, Swedes, and so on, who accept the proffered services are formed into separate groups, properly labeled, taken aboard the ferryboat plying between the immigration station and the mainland, are kept together thereon, and, once on the mainland, with agents leading, with other agents bringing up the rear, and policemen helping to keep a sharp lookout, the groups are piloted safely past the dangers awaiting their less fortunate shipmates at the very gateway of the new land, and led to the offices of the respective societies, whence they are despatched, under escort still, each man to his own particular destination.

Now, see what this means specifically to the immigrant who places himself in the hands of an immigrant society preparatory to landing in the world of his glowing hopes and radiant dreams.

Bernardo Foiere, coming from Durango, Colorado, and on his way to Italy, alighted from a train in Jersey City and was speedily taken in tow by one of the many hotel runners who infest the railroad stations and steamship landings. As he expressed a desire to come to New York, the hotel runner requested the payment of one dollar for his services, which Foiere paid. The runner's services consisted in taking Foiere on the ferryboat to New York City. Once there his guide turned Foiere over to an expressman, who charged him two dollars and a half to take him to a steamship dock not a dozen blocks away.

Foiere had a trunk which was to arrive on the same train with him. So he left the dock and started back to the ferry station, that he might locate and secure his baggage. On the way thither he was picked up by a second expressman, who kindly offered to find his trunk for him for the sum of two dollars and a half. Again Foiere was "easy money," but the trunk was not found. Then the Italian made it known that he wanted to go to a hotel frequented by his countrymen. It was not a quarter of a mile from the ferry station, yet when the expressman had led the way there he collected three dollars.

All this came to light when Foiere

complained to a countryman of the exceedingly great cost of going very short distances in the big city. The Society for Italian Immigrants was at once notified, and, while it could get no trace of the others who had victimized Foiere, it succeeded in locating the expressman who had hold of him last, and this sharpster was made to disgorge the three dollars he had collected.

If a foreigner who has been in America for some time, as was Foiere, can be passed from harpy to harpy in this fashion, how easy it must be to prey on a fresh arrival, absolutely as ignorant as a newborn babe of the strange land and its ways!

As may be gathered from the case of Foiere, the Society for Italian Immigrants, the Societe Francaise de Bienfaisance, the Sociedad Espanola de Beneficencia, the Deutsche Frauen Verein, the Magyar Tarsulat (Hungarian Association), and the hundred and one odd similar bodies do not limit themselves to looking after the welfare of the new arrival. A Frenchman who has been here for some months and becomes the victim of a rascal may appeal to his particular society with the certainty that his case will be taken up

and righted if possible. So with a fleeced Russian Jew, or a Scandinavian, or a German Catholic, or a German Lutheran, a Syrian, or an Armenian. Some societies maintain legal aid branches of their own, others apply to the Legal Aid Society when necessary.

In this connection the societies are frequently called on to fight slyster lawyers. A man who has been in this country for six months or a year finds that at last he is in a position to have his family join him, and sends them the necessary passage money. On the arrival of the ship he goes to Ellis Island to welcome them, and discovers that the sister who has made her home with him and his family in the old country is likely to be deported because of some disease that is named as sufficient cause for disbarment in the laws governing immigration. A runner for a slyster lawyer, learning of the man's dilemma, tells him that his employer can get his sister off the Island if he will pay over the sum of fifty dollars. The man's one thought is to get his sister into the country. He hurries to the lawyer's office and hands over the hard-earned money. A few days later, when he sorrowfully bids his sister

good-by, he is a much wiser man.

The immigration regulations permit a lawyer to charge only ten dollars for services rendered to immigrants, or relatives anxious to get them into the country. One society has had seven lawyers in as many months debarred from practicing at any immigration station because of their habit of overcharging grossly, or for accepting fees to get immigrants landed when it is clear that they cannot be permitted to land under the law. Other lawyers have been debarred because they represented to gullible ones that it was necessary for them to pay certain sums of money before relatives, desirable immigrants in every respect, could be released from the immigration station. This bold game is played with amazing frequency, judging from the cases continually coming to light.

It is a peculiar fact that not a few of the persons who swindle newcomers already landed are foreign born themselves. Italian swindlers prey on Italians, Swedish runners on their kind—each breed of foreign born harpy on his own countrymen.

The Society for Italian Immigrants has recently been instrumental in send-

ing to prison an Italian who for a quarter of a century lived well by swindling resident relatives of immigrants. His game was to represent himself as agent of a steamship company, and on the strength of this misrepresentation induce an ignorant countryman to pay him ten or twenty dollars, supposedly to obtain the release of a relative or friend from Ellis Island. He invariably guaranteed to secure the release of an immigrant already passed for admittance by the officials. In this way he built up quite a reputation among the more ignorant of his countrymen; but at last the Society for Italian Immigrants caught him, and the vicinity of the Barge Office will know him not for a year or two.

While protection from harpies is the first advice rendered immigrants, the societies speedily take up the task of helping them to catch on to the ways of America, and, above all, to become fit citizens of a free country.

The Society for Italian Immigrants—to use it once more for example—has established schools in labor camps where Italians, after working hours, may learn something of the underlying principles of the government, its constitution, its history, its great men, its holidays.

Under the supervision of the Educational Alliance of New York, the Baron de Hirsch Fund, established to care for Jewish immigrants, maintains a school for immigrant children and adults.

The classes for the grown-ups are held in the evenings. From the sweatshops of the East Side the workers, male and female, struggle in from their machines and benches to sit at small desks and thumb beginners' books of English and other simply worded works that will, with patience, give them an

insight of the ways of the new home land." Men there are with sweeping gray beards, and with fifty and sixty years in the past; women there are with anti-race suicide families waiting for them in stuffy tenement rooms. Men and women, married and single, there are of all ages, all intent on learning the ways of America as soon as possible for the good of themselves and their own.

You may think it unnecessary for the societies to maintain such schools, since the public school system provides similar, and, perhaps, better instruction. But remember the average immigrant is clannish, and prefers his own, just as you or I undoubtedly would in a strange land. Many a Russian Jew, who would not enter a public night school, has enthusiastically attended the school for adults of the Baron de Hirsch Fund. In like manner, Italians, Bohemians, and who not, prefer to take their first lessons in Americanism from their own countrymen through the societies maintained by them.

Perhaps the greatest care in these schools is given to instilling patriotism in the students, young and old. Once a week the children who attend the Baron de Hirsch classes join in patriotic exercises. "My Country, 'Tis of Thee," "Hail Columbia," "The Star Spangled Banner," are wonderfully and fearfully sung. The lives of the republic's heroes are told in simple language by the teachers. Whole hearted devotion to the country is earnestly urged. Most impressive of all is the administering of the oath of allegiance to the flag. Here is the oath, written especially for the exercises:

"Flag of our great republic, inspirer in battle, guardian of our homes, whose Stars and Stripes stand for bravery, purity, truth and union, we salute thee! We, the natives of distant lands, who find rest under thy folds, do pledge our hearts, our lives, and our sacred honor to love and protect thee, our country, and the liberty of the American people forever."

Do they understand? you ask. Do they know the meaning of freedom and citizenship, these newly arrived boys and girls and their elders, long ground down by the heels of tyrants? Let a Russian Jew and several Italians give a joint answer:

Isaac Popovitch, three months in America, had been laboriously telling in