

RIVAL LINERS' RACE TO BEAT IMMIGRATION ACT BRINGS TRAGEDY AND JOY TO AMERICA'S DOOR

Many Aliens Who Have Staked Their All on This Magic Land of Promise Arrive, Excited and Expectant, Only to Find Quota Filled and They Must Return

ALLOTMENT FOR MONTH IS EXCEEDED BY GREEKS WITHIN A FEW HOURS

Ellis Island Officials Say Wild Rush Shows Impracticability of Law. Tell of Ingenious Devices Used by Immigrants to Enter Country—Some Rejected End Lives

PICTURE A great modern argosy of steel steamships, all racing through the seas, burning excess coal, on 3000-mile voyages from Mediterranean, western and northern ports of Europe, and all having a common goal.

Each ship is packed to the limit of its third-class or steerage quarters with argonauts in search of a new deal in life, particularly those from the south and east of Europe.

Commanders of these vessels are striving by superior speed, seamanship or shrewd maritime maneuver to arrive at the principal American port at the exact moment when they may first obtain lawful landing for their human freight under the new and severe selective restrictions.

The incoming voyagers have dreamed long of the land across the sea.

Those who have gone before have written to say there are no persecutions, no pogroms, and to tell exactly how many drachmas, lire, rubles, lei or various kinds of kronen and marks a mere day's wages will buy. All languages are spoken in this wonderland where the buildings reach the sky and the streets surpass any cinema.

In latter-day steerage quarters one recent morning, on board one of these ships, the Conte Rosso, were 1068 men, women and children. They danced, sang and romped as they neared the American coast. They feasted on herring, bread, cheese and garlic.

Having miraculously contrived each to scrape together \$250, for steamer passage, minimum landing capital of \$50 and incidental expenses, and having in many cases staked their all on this magic America, they were now at the gates of the land of their high hopes. All were excited; all in highest expectancy.

Race for Shore Means Much to Human Cargo

When a fogged dawn gradually broke over New York harbor, on the morning of July 1, a fleet of such ships, including several from the once classic shores of Greece, were revealed at anchor. They had slipped silently through the Narrows after the stroke of midnight, in order to be the first in port with their profitable human cargoes under the second year's operation of the greatly discussed Dillingham Immigration Act.

To at least three Greek ships, getting in first after midnight meant the difference between big profit and big loss, with heavy fines added by the American Government.

The business reason for the great Transatlantic Handicap is not far to seek. The Dillingham per centum law, which has served to cut down immigration from Southeastern Europe by four-fifths, permits not more than 3 per cent of the particular nationality in each case resident in this country as shown by the 1910 census to enter the United States in any year, and of the number admissible not more than 20 per cent may enter in one month.

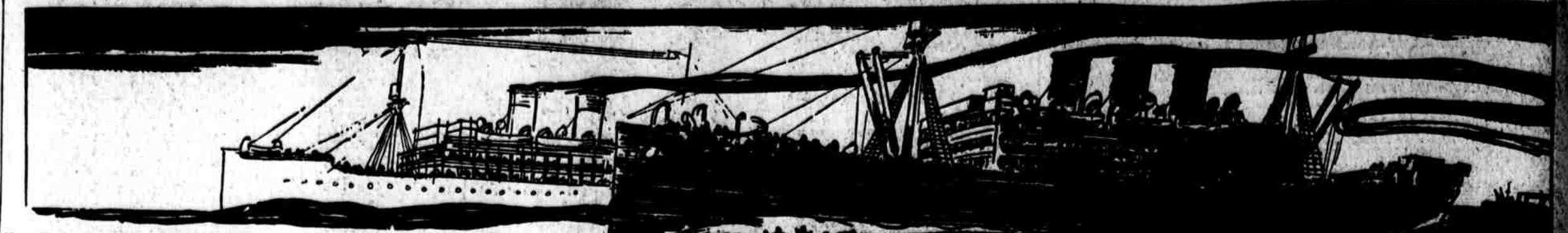
Because of the intense competition of the steamship companies and because of the economic and social distress in the Mediterranean countries, that 20 per cent allotment is sure to be absorbed in the first month of the fiscal year in the case of immigrants from the latter nations.

Allotment for Month Filled in Few Hours

Last week's beginning of the second year of operation of the new law, which became effective June 3, 1921, found the Greeks, with a total allotment of 3294 immigrants for the year, trying to jam 659, the full month's allotment, into the country in the first few hours of the period.

Since the Mediterranean lines now get a steerage fare of about \$160 from the farthest ports, or twice what the first-class passage was less than a decade ago, the business is profitable and there is bitter rivalry among them.

The present fierce competition is intensified by the fact that if a steamship commander fails to get his immigrant charges into port in time, since the ships are examined and unloaded in the chronological



New York just after midnight within a few seconds of each other. They were so close together that they had to go to court to settle which got in first, and after a battle the King Alexander won. In the meantime the penned-up steerage passengers waited in anxiety and speculated on the outcome.

This year the two ships were again in the line-up with such ships as the Argentine, the Conte Rosso, the Presidente Wilson and many others, but the King Alexander indisputably won with her Greek immigrants, for the unlucky Acropolis was delayed supposedly by poor coal, and arrived several days later.

She faced having to pay \$18,000 in fines on ninety surplus passengers, besides returning them and refunding their passage money, as it was known she could not turn back because of perishable cargo and other considerations. Three steamers brought in a total of more Greek immigrants than the law allowed.

It so happened that the fog settled the winners of this year's race and two steamships made Quarantine neck and

order of their arrivals, his company is fined \$200 for each immigrant deported, and restitution of fare must be made to each of such passengers who must also be returned home at the company's expense.

Efforts at co-operation to divide equitably the immigrant business so that no excess passengers will be brought over from the closely restricted regions have failed, largely because of the attitude of the Greek lines. It has therefore become a matter of cutthroat competition and let the devil take those who lag in the race.

Arrival Means Fight to Beat Quota Figures

As was the case twelve months ago, the first day of arrivals at the opening of the new immigration year was one of quarrels between steamship companies and Government officials, to say nothing of anxieties and uncertainties for the steerage argonauts. The losing of the winning of large sums of money was involved in the contests which may be adjudicated only by boards of review or finally in the Federal courts.

After this year's fleet had raced across to give the Immigration Service more trouble than it has had since the armistice, the ships jockeyed for anchorage just outside the international maritime boundary. Without the Ambrose Channel Lightship on all of the night closing the fiscal year, lay the steamers.

Few slept in the steerage quarters that night except the youngest children. Lights twinkled out of portholes through the murk of a thick night. There were animated conversations. Snatches of song, the thrumming of guitars and the sounds of dancing on the decks were wafted across the waters.

A score of big steamers, a round dozen of merchantmen were laden with some 7000 immigrants.

Fog had obscured them throughout the greater part of the day as they had carefully felt their way westward from Nantucket, but all the captains were in excited wireless communication with their agents, seeking and receiving instructions about their dash into port when midnight should have struck.

Say Wild Dash Shows Impracticability of Law

The inequities of the situation were evident. Since the Department of Labor has inadequate means of holding the human tide in check at its source, it is a case of first come first counted. The early steamer to enter port and claim its steerage passengers against the quota from a country under the existing rigid restrictions is of course treated as a winner and bears off the spoils.

Another vessel of slower speed, or that is held up by fog or accident or poor coal, has to pay the stiff penalties of a loser, regardless of the fact that she left her home port in good faith with a reasonable alien passenger complement that there was every reason to believe would be admitted to the United States.

Ingenious Devices Used to Circumvent the Law

When a newspaper caller wedged in and contrived to ask questions between telephone calls and messengers bringing fresh questions and masses of documents Mr. Landis managed smilingly to say:

"Our present predicament in handling this rush is due in part to the workings of the new law and in part to the wave of economy in Congress. Last year we had 772 people in our personnel to handle the incoming and bunched flood of aliens. This year we have fewer than 400, including the inspectors, a reduction of 50 per cent.

"Our staff during the next five months, in which time we expect the immigration quotas of the most restricted countries to be exhausted, will have to work overtime long hours and without extra compensation. The theory in Congress, of course, was that

Waiting to enter the "Promised Land"



Liberty that he could put the late Enrico Caruso to blush.

"We were at first stumped, but as we had decided suspicions because of the appearance of the quintet, we asked them to demonstrate their talents. We were especially anxious to hear the fellow that made Caruso a cabaret singer by comparison. Calling for proof of their powers rather stumped them, as it was wholly unexpected, but they saw it through.

"They were a terrible crew of 'artists.' The show they put on was one of the funniest things in the annals of Ellis Island, especially the contribution of Caruso's rival, who roared like a bull and seemingly made up his airs

neck. They were the Presidente Wilson and the Italian steamship Argentine, both from Mediterranean ports. They were closely followed by the Latvia from the Mediterranean and the Vasari from South America. The Conte Rosso came in later in the morning. Although the King Alexander was fogbound and could not get inside with the earliest arrivals she outstripped her rival, the Acropolis.

There were 1708 steerage passengers on the ships that managed to slip in through the fog the first morning, and of these, 1321 were immediately received at Ellis Island and handled by the much-reduced force of inspectors.

The staff worked hours overtime the first night and all day Sunday without overtime remuneration such as is paid the customs inspectors. More ships entered port on Sunday, and the overworked inspection force got little time even for sleep.

On Ellis Island Harry R. Landis, Assistant Commissioner of Immigration, was besieged by assistants and inspectors and lawyers representing arriving clients. His desk was piled high with official papers for examination, decisions and signature. It didn't look as though he could ever wade out beneath the mass of details presented for his immediate action.

"We encounter some decidedly humorous cases, as well as tragic ones, in making the law fit the circumstances that arise. "Lately five Italians who came over to make America their very own order found that they couldn't get in according to their original plans as the quota was exhausted, so they took counsel together on what to do. "They announced with their best flourish that they were traveling artists, admissible under the law, honest opera and vaudeville singers. One of the alleged singers swore by the Statue of



Robert E. Tod, Commissioner of Immigration

don't think we are. We are bound by these new immigration laws—not by red tape. We work rapidly here and red tape suggests slowness or, worse still, bone-headedness.

Many Tragedies Follow Deportation of Aliens

"Once in a while some clever lawyer trying to get some immigrant into the country or to expedite settlement of an unusual case where on the face of it Congress has decreed the person may not enter, cooks up a heartrending yarn about his client. His story becomes public and many folk swallow it hook, line and sinker. Recently the service was attacked publicly three times on supposititious facts that had not the slightest foundation.

"Sometimes the newspapers from one end of the country to the other will light into us all and call us a bunch of hard-hearted, hard-boiled, solid-ivory domed bureaucrats tied down with red tape. Really, and I am an ex-newspaperman myself, I wish the big dailies would give us a roll for our white alleys occasionally." The Commissioner of Immigration is Robert E. Tod.

Before he left Ellis Island the visitor was shown a blood-spattered power launch which had been captured in the harbor a few nights before and in which a defiant run-runner had been shot to death.

"Booze is not all that is being smuggled into the country now," said F. D. Altman, one of the inspectors on duty. "There are 4000 Russians in

two Africans. The Argentine besides Greeks brought over a large list of Jugo-Slavs, Syrians, Bulgarians, Albanians and Russians.

Many Tragedies Follow Deportation of Aliens

To the steerage passengers the voyage over and the arrival at New York constitute the great adventure of a lifetime. They are seekers for peace and prosperity away from the oppression, bickering and lack of opportunities in the lands they have always called home. With no peace yet in Europe, they seek a new chance in the world of rainbows and of golden pots.

Having learned of the wonders of America they are sure that no matter under what conditions they find themselves they will be halcyon by comparison with what they have left. They are obliged to return because of the calculations of the steamship lines the tragedies to them are almost greater than they can bear.

Many have leaped overboard to watery graves on the way back under deportation orders, rather than face their previous case.

This year the work of sifting the dross from the gold among the immigrants will be more systematic than it was last year, it is declared, but it will not be lacking in its pathos and in its comedy. There undoubtedly will be many hundreds of aliens sent back either because of the exhaustion early



Cuba who are getting across into the United States by any means possible since the new immigration restrictions bar them out. Under the old regulations one year's residence in Cuba was sufficient for them to get a passport admitting them to the United States. Now it is necessary, under the law, for them to live in Cuba five years before they can obtain a passport.

"Some of them are getting in just the same without passports. Sailing craft that are paid for it will take them as sailors and set them down in small boats off Hatteras or along the coast down to Florida where they contrive to get ashore. With all the precautions taken it is hard to get them all."

The ships now arriving at New York harbor loaded with immigrants are like the Tower of Babel so far as confusion of tongues is concerned. The racing King Alexander, for example, in addition to 520 Greeks brought ninety-three Russians, seventy-one Turks, twenty-two Rumanians, one Syrian, two from the United Kingdom, sixteen Asiatics, including Persians, one Hollander, one Italian, twenty-five Albanians, two Bulgarians, fifty-four Armenians and

of their respective quotas, or because of mental or physical defects under the immigration regulations. This will cause disappointment to entire families that have spent their life's savings for the steamship tickets and burned their bridges behind them. On return, their homes and, worst of all, their courage will be gone. Immigration officers declare the Italian Government has become cognizant of the troubles given this country by the immigrants, and this year it has its own health officials examine every emigrant before he is allowed to board a ship bound for America. If the Italian health officials believe the emigrant will not be accepted over here the native is not allowed to board the ship. The Italian quota of 8000 for the first month is expected to be filled early. The monthly Greek allotment is already filled. Other first quotas from highly restricted countries that are expected soon to be filled are as follows: Russia, 4823; Latvia, 270; Lithuania, 462; Estonia, 270; Poland, 4215. The German, English and French quotas for this year are so large that there is scarcely a possibility that all of them will be filled. Not half of all allotments of these three nations were utilized last year.