

# The Foreigner's Care of His Countryman

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FROM whatever part of the world a poor man may come he is practically sure of obtaining advice and assistance from his countrymen the moment he lands in New York or any other big American port.

The immigrants who have come here and "made good" do not leave their countrymen who follow after them to be succored by charitable Americans. Whatever their nationality may be they support societies of their own whose objects are to look out for the immigrants as they arrive, rescue them from the grafters and crooks who hang around the immigration offices, help them to seek out relatives or to find employment, relieve them when they are sick and destitute, and generally look after them until they have learned the ways of the country and become able to shift for themselves.

If the immigrant is a poor Frenchman, the Societe Francaise de Bienfaisance takes hold of him. This society runs a bureau of immigration which directs French immigrants upon arrival and returns to France those remaining a charge upon the society. There is a similar Belgian organization—the Societe Belge de Bienfaisance. Needy Spaniards are assisted by the Sociedad Espanola de Beneficencia; poor Germans by the Deutsche Gesellschaft, the Deutsche Frauen Verein and other societies; while the necessities of Hungarian immigrants are relieved by the Magyar Tarsulat (Hungarian association). The St. Andrew's, St. David's and St. George's societies look after distressed Scotsmen, Welshmen and Englishmen, respectively, the first named society, founded in 1750, being the oldest of its kind in the United States. The Swiss Benevolent society is the only immigrant helping institution in the United States which is officially supported by its native government. Besides voluntary contributions from the charitably inclined, it receives large donations from the Swiss Confederation.

In addition to the societies already mentioned, there are others maintained for Austrians, Russians, Roumanians, Galicians, Canadians, Danes, Swedes, Norwegians, Irishmen, German Catholics, German Lutherans, Cubans, Japanese, Chinese and even Syrians and Armenians. All these societies are essentially national in their character and are conducted and supported by men who were immigrants themselves not so long ago.

The idea underlying the working of most of the societies is to make good Americans out of the immigrants of their own race. They usually announce this object without the slightest hesitation and do not lose support among the people of their nationality by so doing.

The Armenian Union of America, for example, exists to unite the Armenians scattered throughout the United States and to inculcate principles of patriotism and loyalty to their adopted country, besides providing for the sick and needy. The Syrian society provides educational and industrial institutions for all Syrian and Arabic-speaking immigrants, teaches them English and prepares their children to enter the public schools. The St. Raphael's Italian Benevolent society, over which Archbishop Farley presides, exhorts Italian immigrants "to love and honor this hospitable land by faithful and honest work and to respect its laws." The Baron de Hirsch fund, which exists for the benefit of Russian, Roumanian and Galician Hebrew immigrants, aims, according to its own declaration, "to Americanize and assimilate the immigrants with the masses by teaching them to become good citizens and to prevent by all proper means their congregating in large cities." The elementary lessons in English given in its day and night schools explain the constitution of the United States and cultivate patriotism and loyalty to the Stars and Stripes.

The tremendous immigration of Italians into America in recent years, especially through the port of New York, has placed an exceptionally heavy burden upon the Italians and Italian-Americans already resident in this country. They are bearing it nobly. Rich and poor alike contribute to the support of many societies which look after the immigrants when they land, supply their needs, find them work and protect them from imposition. Chief among these worthy organizations are the Society for the Protection of Italian Immigrants and the Italian Benevolent Institute, both of which, unlike most other Italian societies, are national in their character and the scope of their work. Their efforts for the benefit of the immigrants have been gratefully acknowledged by the Italian government, and the Benevolent Institute has received a personal gift of 20,000 lire (\$4,000) from the king of Italy. Unlike Russia and some other countries, Italy takes a kindly interest in the welfare of its sons who come to America.

"Almost all of the Italian immigrants are very ignorant, very childlike and wholly unfamiliar with the ways, customs and languages of this country," said Elliot Norton, president of the Society for the Protection of Italian Immigrants. "They need friendly assistance from the moment



LOOKING AFTER IMMIGRANTS ON THE WHARF.



PINNING AN ADDRESS TAG ON A WOMAN IMMIGRANT, SO SHE MAY REACH HER DESTINATION SAFELY EVEN IF SHE GETS LOST.

of debarkation. Those who go into the interior of the country need to be helped in getting on the right train, without losing their way or money; while those coming to New York need guidance to their destination and, while going there, protection from sharps, crooks and dishonest runners, and thereafter to have advice and employment."

The society over which Mr. Norton presides is one of the most energetic of its kind. It needs to be, for Italy contributes the largest total of immigrants to America nowadays, and the number is increasing every year. A description of the working of this powerful Italian society will give an insight into that of the other national organizations, which operate along much the same lines.

The society's agents wait at the immigration stations for steamers carrying immigrants, for whom they immediately act as interpreters and friendly advisers in their troubles with the immigration officials. With immigrants who have friends waiting for them the society's agents do not concern themselves, for they have enough to do for the others, who have not the slightest idea whether they are going.

They tell such helpless creatures how to communicate with their relatives in the country, how to get food, how to buy their railroad tickets, how best to get to their destinations without losing time or money.

In short, they do for them, in President Norton's words, "what travelers in a strange country have always wanted done for them since the beginning of the world"—and Italian immigrants, it must be re-



ITALIAN IMMIGRANT BEFRIENDED BY AN AGENT OF THE ITALIAN SOCIETY.

membered, are the most ignorant and timid kind of travelers.

"Great abuses were formerly practiced upon immigrants in New York City by boarding house runners," said President Norton. "These runners would take an immigrant to a destination to which he did not want to go, where, on one pretext or another, he would be made to pay various sums of money.

"As a preliminary fee for taking him to his destination they would extort \$2 or \$3, and sometimes even go so far as to force him by compulsion of one kind or another to pay a so-called immigration tax of \$1. Then they would force a further payment of from 50 cents to \$1 for finally taking the immigrant where he wanted to go.

"These frauds used to be of daily occurrence and they were not confined to the immigrants who landed in New York. Italians were landed at Boston by the

Domion line every week or so, and sent on to New York by rail, arriving at the Grand Central station usually early in the morning. There they were pounced upon by the same body of runners who infested the New York barge office and were robbed of their money in the manner already described."

The society has changed all this by establishing an "escort service," which takes the immigrants in hand and guides them to their proper destination for a nominal fee. During the first two years and a half of the working of this escort service nearly 8,000 friendless immigrants have been provided for at an average cost of 32 cents apiece, as against at least \$4 which immigrants were formerly forced to pay by sharps.

Immigrants bound for places in remote sections of the country frequently land in

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